Al-Mīzān

An Exegesis of the Qur'an

ʿAllāmah al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī

Translated by: Alexander Khaleeli

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In the Name of Allah,
the Beneficent, the Merciful.

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds;
the Beneficent, the Merciful;
the Master of the Day of Judgment;
Thee only we serve, and to Thee alone we beseech
for help;
Guide us in the straight path;
The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed
favors,not of those against whom Thou art
wrathful, nor of those who are astray.

O' Allah! send Your blessings to the head of
Your messengers and the last of
Your prophets,
Muḥammad and his pure and cleansed progeny.
Also send Your blessings to all Your
prophets and envoys.

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Arabic Transliteration Key

Arabic Letters	Transliteration	Arabic Letters	Transliteration
ا	ā	ع	ʿ
ب	b	غ	gh
ت	t	ف	f
ث	th	ق	q
ج	j	ك	k
ح	ḥ	ل	l
خ	kh	م	m
د	d	ن	n
ذ	dh	ه	h
ر	r	و	w/ū
ز	z	ى	y/ī
س	s	ء	ʾ
ش	sh	ة	ah
ص	ṣ	ـَ	a
ض	ḍ	ـَ	i
ط	ṭ	ـُ	u
ظ	ẓ		

Publisher's Note

To enhance the readability of the text for English-speaking readers, the editors have opted to employ English names for the prophets and figures (including those listed below and others) and to utilize Anglicized terms that are now recognized in English dictionaries.

Ādam	Adam	Mūsā	Moses
Dāwūd	David	Sulaymān	Solomon
Hārūn	Aaron	Shuʿayb	Jethro
Ibrāhīm	Abraham	Yaʿqūb	Jacob
ʿĪsā	Jesus	ʾAyyūb	Job
Isḥāq	Isaac	Yūnus	Jonah
Ismāʿīl	Ishmael	Yūsuf	Joseph
Jibrāʾīl	Gabriel	Zakariyyā	Zachariah
Lūt	Lot	ʿUzayr	Ezra

Arabic terms and names have been transliterated according to the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (*IJMES*).

For ease of reading, glyphs and traditional honorifics such as "peace be upon him" or which are commonly used as a gesture of respect after the name of the Prophet Muhammad, the Imāms, or other sacred figures have been omitted from this text. No disrespect is intended, and may God's peace and blessings be upon them all!

Foreword

As we present to you the final volume, Volume 24, of the monumental English translation of *Tafsīr al-Mīzān* by ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī, it is with a heart brimming with gratitude and humility that we reflect upon this journey. This volume marks the culmination of a decade-long endeavor, a journey of faith, perseverance, and intellectual exploration, bringing to completion the translation of a seminal work in Islamic scholarship.

This volume delves into the intricate and profound insights of Surah Al-Nahl, a chapter that holds a unique position within the Qur'an, encapsulating the essence of divine guidance and the imminent decree of God. ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī, with his characteristic depth and clarity, navigates through the verses, drawing upon the rich tapestry of Islamic thought and scholarship.

The early verses of Surah Al-Nahl, believed to be revealed during the Prophet's final days in Mecca, focus on the natural and celestial blessings bestowed upon humanity. These verses are not merely an enumeration of divine favors but serve as a cogent argument for God's unity and providence. *In these verses, such as Allah's edict is coming! So do not seek to hasten it. Immaculate is He and exalted above having any partners that they ascribe to Him* (16:1), ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī highlights the impending divine decree, a theme that resonates throughout the chapter.

The latter part of the chapter, revealed in Medina, shifts to encompass themes of migration (*hijra*), faith, and patience in the face of adversity. Here, the verses address critical events and rulings pertinent to the nascent Muslim community, elucidating on the complexities of faith and the challenges faced by early Muslims.

ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī's insights into the thematic shifts between the Meccan and Medinan verses of this chapter provide a nuanced understanding of the Qur'anic message, underscoring the timeless relevance of its guidance. The exegesis of verses such as *Those who migrate for the sake of Allah after they have been wronged* (16:41) and *Whoever renounces faith in Allah after affirming his faith* (16:106) is particularly enlightening, offering a deep dive into the socio-political context of the early Islamic era.

This volume, like its predecessors, is not merely a translation but a bridge connecting the English-speaking world to the rich Islamic intellectual tradition. It is a testament to the unwavering commitment and scholarly rigor of the team of translators and editors who have dedicated themselves to this monumental task.

As we close this chapter of our journey with *Tafsīr al-Mīzān*, we express our profound gratitude to God for His guidance and strength throughout this project. We also extend our heartfelt thanks to the numerous individuals who have supported this endeavor in various capacities. Their dedication and perseverance have been pivotal in bringing this work to fruition.

We pray that this translation serves as a beacon of knowledge and understanding for all those who seek to delve deeper into the Qur'an's timeless wisdom. May it inspire and guide readers on their spiritual and intellectual journeys.

In conclusion, we remember the words of ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī: "The main theme of the end of the chapter is to command patience and to promise a good reward for having patience in the way of God." This volume, and indeed the entire series of *Tafsīr al-Mīzān*, is a tribute to the enduring power of patience, faith, and scholarly pursuit in the path of Almighty God.

Ali Khalfan
Tawheed Institute Australia Ltd.
March 2024

Chapter 14

Sūrah Al-Nahl (The Bee)

almizan.org

بِسۡمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate

Introduction

If we carefully examine this chapter, it seems highly likely that the beginning of the chapter consists of verses that were revealed during the final days of the Prophet's stay in Mecca, on the eve of his emigration to Medina. This covers the first forty verses of the chapter, where God calls attention to a variety of celestial and terrestrial blessings that form the basis of human life and are beneficial to human beings in their worldly affairs. He has provided evidence of His unity in Lordship through the precise order and harmonious arrangement of these blessings.

In another section of these early verses, God argues against the falsehood of the beliefs of the idol worshipers and exposes the futility of their endeavours, stating that He will soon punish them just as He punished previous nations who were like them, and that He will soon settle their account on the Day of Resurrection through His justice.

God the Exalted begins these verses with the statement, *Allah's edict is coming! So do not seek to hasten it. Immaculate is He and exalted above having any partners that they ascribe to Him* (16:1), following this with verses containing arguments for His transcendence and glorification. From the arrangement of these arguments, we can understand that the primary aim of the verses at the beginning of the chapter is to warn the audience of the imminence of divine edict and tell them that it will befall them soon. Furthermore, they contain a threat to the idol worshipers who, in mockery, used to ask why the punishment the Prophet had warned about had not yet been sent down to them. This is akin to the verse, *Yet excuse and forbear until Allah issues His edict* (2:109), in which He gives glad tidings to the believers that soon, the truth will soon prevail over falsehood,

monotheism over polytheism, and faith over disbelief.

As for the remainder of the verses of the chapter, which consists of eighty-eight verses starting with, *Those who migrate for the sake of Allah after they have been wronged* (16:41), and continuing to the end of the chapter, their connection and context suggest that they were revealed in the early years of the Prophet's time in Medina, following the Emigration.

The beginning and the end of the surah appear to have been revealed at times that were very close to one another. This is due to the presence of verses whose contents only apply to certain incidents that occurred following the migration. For example, the verse that says, *Those who migrate for the sake of Allah ...* (13:41) and the verse ' *We certainly know that they say, 'It is only a human that instructs him'* (16:103), which was revealed regarding Salmān al-Fārsī, who embraced the faith in Medina, and the verse, *Whoever renounces faith in Allah after affirming his faith—barring someone who is compelled ...*(16:106), which was revealed concerning 'Ammār, as will be discussed. Also, verses were revealed regarding the Jews and others concerning legal rulings—all of this suggests that these verses in question are Medinan.

However, there is an apparent difference in the time of revelation within some of them, such as *Those who migrate for the sake of Allah ...* , and *When We change a sign with another in its place—and Allah knows best what He sends down—they say, 'You are just a* fabricator' (16:101), which could extend to two or five verses, and *Whoever renounces faith in Allah after affirming his faith...* followed by several verses.

In all fairness, after considering all aspects, verses such as *Those who migrate for the sake of Allah ...* and the verses that follow it, and *Whoever renounces faith in Allah after affirming his faith ...*', along with a few subsequent verses, and ' *And if you retaliate, retaliate with the like of what you have been made to suffer* (16:126) and the two verses that follow, are Medinan due to the contextual evidence that supports this. The rest seem more likely to be Meccan than Medinan. Although this may not conform to some of the traditional narrations, the context itself testifies to this, and it is more deserving to be followed. In the interpretation of verse 118 from Surah al-An'ām, we discussed the possibility that it was revealed after Surah Al-Nahl, which is Meccan in origin. The main theme of the end of the chapter is to command patience and to promise a good reward for having patience in the way of God.

The purpose of this chapter is to announce the imminent decree of God, which refers to the triumph of the true religion over the disbelievers. God concludes that the sole deity worthy of worship is Him alone since the governance of the universe, like its creation, is solely contingent upon Him, and all blessings originate from Him—none of them are the product of any other than Him. Therefore, it is imperative to worship only the One True God.

The chapter also clarifies that since the true religion is from God, no other religion or law should be legislated or followed besides His. Further details regarding the divine religion are explained as well.

This is the objective pursued by most verses of this chapter, which they follow up with various statements. While expressing this purpose, there are verses that address the issue of migration and related matters.

Verses 1–21

أَتَىٰ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلُوهُ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَىٰ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١﴾

(16:1) Allah's edict is coming! So do not seek to hasten it. Immaculate is He and exalted above having any partners that they ascribe to Him.

From the context, it appears that this verse is addressed to the idol worshipers, as the subsequent verses are all engaged in argumentation against them. The flow of discussion continues until verse twenty-two, which states: *Your God is the One God...* (16:22), which is likewise directed toward them. All of these verses serve as a logical corollary to the phrase under discussion, which states: *Immaculate is He and exalted above having any partners that they ascribe to Him*.

The implication of this arrangement is that the edict, whose coming is foretold at the beginning of the verse—*Allah's edict is coming!*—is one that purifies the realm of God's Lordship from the idolaters polytheism and eradicates it completely. Nowhere in God's discourse are the believers described as being hasty in matters; instead, wherever the matter of the Hour, the Resurrection, the victory of Islam, or the descent of divine punishment is mentioned, it is the idolaters who are described as being impatient and hasty.

Some examples of this can be seen in the verse the verse: *Say, 'Tell me, should His punishment overtake you by night or day; so what part of it do the guilty seek to hasten?'... They inquire of you, 'Is it true?' Say, 'Yes! By my Lord, it is true, and you cannot thwart* (10:50–53), and other similar verses, all of which are addressed to the idol worshipers.

Therefore, the intended meaning of the edict whose coming is foretold in the verse is the very promise that God gave to His Messenger and to the believers who were with him. It is also the fulfillment of the warnings that were repeatedly given to the idol worshipers, where it was declared: *Yet excuse and forbear until Allah issues His edict. Indeed Allah has power over all things* (2:109). Based on the context, pronoun 'it' in the phrase *do not seek to hasten it* (fa-lā tastaʿjilū-hu) appears to refer to this edict. It is also possible that the intended meaning of the phrase, *Allah's edict is coming!*, is to signify its imminence, a usage that is common in conventional conversations. For example, to someone awaiting the arrival of a leader, and wishing to convey that his arrival is imminent, one might say: 'Here comes the leader', even though he has not yet arrived.

Additionally, note that the phrasing of the verse, *Immaculate is He and exalted above having any partners that they ascribe to Him*, shifts from addressing an absent audience to a present one (since previously it was said, *So do not seek to hasten ...* whereas now it is stated, *Immaculate is He and exalted above having any partners that they ascribe to Him.*) This rhetorical turn indicates that those who worship idols are so contemptible that they are not worthy of a direct address, and their apparent hastiness for the punishment to come stems, in fact, from their polytheism and is a form of mockery and scorn toward the Prophets' call.

From what has been discussed, it is evident that the argument posited by some commentators—that the verse addresses both believers and idol worshipers—is to be disregarded, as it is evident that this view is incongruent with the context of the verse.

Furthermore, God Almighty in another part of His discourse explicitly denies that the believers are those who hasten for it and states: *Those who do not believe in it ask to hasten it, but those who have faith are apprehensive of it, and know that it is true* (42:18). This also refutes the claim made by some others that the 'edict' refers to the Day of Judgment, because although the idol worshipers did indeed hasten the punishment of the

afterlife—as evidenced by the verse *When will this promise be fulfilled, if you are truthful?* (36:48)—the context of the verse under discussion, as previously mentioned, indicates otherwise.

What is remarkable here is that some proponents of this theory have argued for it by referencing the declaration at the end of Surah al-Ḥijr: *by your Lord, We will question them all* (15:92), saying that this shows the present verse is a reference to the Resurrection and the questioning of the idol worshipers. They also say that the beginning of this chapter—*Allah's edict is coming!*—parallels the phrase at the end of Surah al-Ḥijr: *and worship your Lord until certainty comes to you* (15:99). Considering that '*certainty*' in this verse means death, it is very appropriate to interpret the chapter in question as referring to the Day of Judgment rather than worldly punishments. Among the evidence reinforcing this association is the usage of the term 'comes to you' in that chapter and 'has come' in this chapter, which are expressed with the same root in Arabic. However, such tortuous interpretations should not be heeded.

Similar to this reasoning is the argument by some other commentators who have posited that the 'edict' (*amr*) refers to the singular of commands (*awāmir*), meaning a legislative decree or law. They suggest that the phrase should be understood as 'The command of God has come', signifying that God's decrees are detailed in this chapter, which includes oaths, pledges, and prohibitions—hence, they say that the statement, *so do not seek to hasten it*, is specifically directed to the believers. However, this argument is evidently flawed.

يُنَزِّلُ الْمَلاَئِكَةَ بِالْرُّوحِ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ عَلَى مَن يَشَاء مِنْ عِبَادِهِ أَنْ أَنذِرُواْ أَنَّهُ
لاَ إِلَهَ إِلاَّ أَنَاْ فَاتَّقُونِ ۝٢

(16:2) He sends down the angels with the Spirit (*rūh*) of His command to whomever He wishes of His servants: 'Warn the people that there is no god except Me; so be wary of Me.'

People, both in the past and present, despite their profound disagreements about the nature of the soul, unanimously understand a single meaning from the word 'spirit,' which is that which is the cause of life and vitality, certainly a life characterized by consciousness and will. And it is this meaning that is intended in the verse under discussion.

As for what the reality of the spirit is, it can be understood in general from the verses of the Qur'an. For instance, from the verse *on the day when the Spirit and the angels stand in an array* (78:38) and from the verse, *The angels and the Spirit ascend to Him in a day whose span is fifty thousand years* (70:4), and from other verses, it is concluded that the spirit is an independent reality, an entity endowed with life, knowledge, and power, not one that is merely an attribute or state that exists in another entity, as some have mistakenly thought.

The Qur'an, from another aspect, identifies the spirit as part of the Lord's command, saying: '*The Spirit is of the command of my Lord*' (17:85), and then it defines the Lord's command with verses like *All His command, when He wills something, is to say to it 'Be,' and it is. So immaculate is He in whose hand is the dominion of all things* (36:82) conveying that the command of God is that creative word which God uses to bring things into existence. In other words, the command of God is the very existence that He bestows upon things, but not existence in every aspect; rather, it is an existence that is contingent upon the Divine and is not mixed with matter, time, or space, as indicated by the verse '*and Our command is but a single thing, like the twinkling of an eye* (54:50), pointing to this independence from matter, time, and space, as the quoted expression is used in a context where gradual process is not involved—that is, not material or subject to material motion. Esteemed reader, keep this summary in mind, until, God willing, a more detailed explanation will be presented in our exegesis of Surah al-Isrā'.[1]

From the brief explanation given above, it becomes evident that the spirit is the word of life which God speaks into objects, bringing them to life according to His will. For this reason, it is referred to in the verse *Thus have We revealed to you the Spirit of Our dispensation*, as inspiration and the imparting of it to the messenger and prophet is called revelation. Therefore, the meaning of imparting God's sublime word (the word of life) into the heart of God's messenger is that the spirit is revealed to him. Keep this in mind.

He sends down the angels with the Spirit of His command (bi al-rūh min amri-hi)—whether we interpret the preposition *bi* as causative or

1 See Eng. vol. 25 (Ed.)

as denoting companionship, the meaning remains essentially the same and there will not be much difference between the two readings. This becomes clear upon careful reflection, for the descent of the angels with the accompaniment of the spirit means the instillation of it into the heart of the prophet so that his heart, with the possession of that spirit, becomes prepared to receive divine knowledge. Similarly, the descent of the angels because of the spirit conveys more or less the same meaning, since the word of God, which is the word of life, influences the angels and brings them to life just as it does humans. The pronoun 'He' in the phrase *He sends down* refers back to God, and the sentence is an explanatory one that provides the rationale for the coda of the preceding verse: *exalted above having any partners that they ascribe to Him*.

The verse conveys that God Almighty is exalted and far above the notion of associating any partners with Him. His transcendence and uniqueness are the very reasons He dispatches angels, who are either accompanied by the spirit—akin to His divine command and part of His act of creation—*or* because of His command. These angels are sent to whomever He wills among His servants. Their mission is to deliver a clear message to humanity: there is no deity except God Himself. They also caution against the worship of any entities other than Him.

Commentators have interpreted this verse in diverse ways. Some have suggested that 'the Spirit' symbolizes the revelation or the Qur'an. They argue that the term 'spirit' is used because, akin to how the human spirit gives life to the body, the revelation or the Qur'an revitalizes the hearts of people. The same commentator further explains that the phrase 'of His command' (*min amri-hi*) should be understood as 'by His command.' This explanation is supported by the usage in another verse, '*who guard him from Allah's command*,'[1] which implies 'because of the command of God.' This is because it is commonly acknowledged that no one can guard anyone 'from' the command of God.

As for the claim that the preposition '*min*' ('of') in *min amri-hi* means '*bi*' ('by'), and the reference to the verse *who guard him from Allah's command*, the response is the same as we have previously discussed in our commentary on this verse in Surah Ra'd. There we mentioned that the

1 See verse 13:11 (Ed.)

preposition '*min*' retains its own meaning and does not mean '*bi*,' as part of God's command protects some creations from others. In the verse under discussion, the meaning of *with the Spirit of His command* is the spirit that is from the command of God—and besides, the genitive phrase *min amri-hi* ('of His command') is properly placed and not superfluous—just as it is in the verse, *The Spirit is of the command of my Lord*. This differs from the verse '*who guard him from Allah's command*, and even if in that instance it means 'by,' we cannot say that in these two cases it also necessarily means 'by.'

The view that the term 'Spirit' in this context refers to revelation, the Qur'an, or as some suggest, prophethood, holds some merit in terms of the resulting implications. Indeed, the sending down of angels with a spirit by God's command does lead to revelation and prophethood. However, it is not accurate to inherently define revelation and prophethood as 'spirit,' or to interpret them as such based on a common lexical meaning. Nor is it appropriate to use a metaphor suggesting that the 'spirit' enlivens the heart in the same way the actual spirit gives life to the body. The reason for this is that we have consistently emphasized the importance of understanding Qur'anic terms by referring to their usage in other relevant Qur'anic contexts for interpretation. This approach is preferable to relying on general linguistic practices and their interpretation of word applications.

What we gather from other instances in the Qur'an is that the 'spirit' is itself a creation among God's creations, an entity with various levels and degrees. One level of it exists in animals and in non-believers among humans, and a higher level is found within believing individuals, as it is stated *and strengthened them with a spirit from Him* (58:22). Another level of the spirit is that by which prophets and messengers are fortified, as mentioned: *and supported him with the Holy Spirit* (2:87), and also: '*Thus have We revealed to you the Spirit of Our dispensation* (42:52), the details of which, God willing, will be discussed later.

This is the understanding that is derived from the verses of the Qur'an. As for the discussion on whether the application of the term 'spirit' to this idea is literal or figurative, and the intricacy of whether, if figurative, it is an explicit metaphor or an implicit one, or whether the phrase *with the Spirit of His command* is an example of simile intended to specify the likeness, which is indeed plausible based on my earlier explanation—as

commentators have expressly stated in regards to the verse: *and eat and drink until the white streak becomes manifest to you from the dark streak at the crack of dawn* (2:187)—that it is a simile meant to clarify the likeness within the context of speech. These are literary discussions with a technical aspect, but they do not contribute significantly to uncovering truths.

Others have said: The phrase 'of His command' is intended to explain the nature of 'the Spirit', which is meant to signify revelation, as previously discussed.

The issue with this reading, disregarding the problems we have already outlined above, is that this verse and the verse '*The Spirit is of the command of my Lord*' in the Surah al-Isrā', follow a similar path, and the apparently undeniable meaning of the verse in al-Isrā' is that the preposition 'of' (*min*) there signifies its origin. It means to convey that the Spirit is part of the divine command and one of its aspects. Similar in approach to this is the verse, *The angels and the Spirit descend therein by the permission of their Lord for every command* (97:4).

Some others have said that the Spirit refers to Gabriel, and they substantiate their claim with the verse, *brought down* (nazala bi-hi) *by the Trustworthy Spirit upon your heart* (26:193–194). They affirm that the Trustworthy Spirit undoubtedly refers to Gabriel, and the preposition *bi* in that verse signifies accompaniment. Furthermore, the term 'angels' in the present verse refers to the angels of revelation who are aides to Gabriel, and the term '*amr*' refers to a command (rather than affair or a matter), implying that the Almighty sends down the angels of revelation, along with Gabriel, to deliver His commands to the prophets.

The issue with this interpretation lies in its similarity to the message of another verse, "*He casts the Spirit of His command upon whomever of His servants that He wishes, that he may warn of the Day of Encounter*" (40:15). The apparent meaning of this verse doesn't align with identifying the 'Spirit' as Gabriel. If 'the Spirit' were interpreted as Gabriel, the verse would imply that God sends Gabriel, by His command, to any of His servants He chooses, to warn them about the Day of Meeting. However, this interpretation seems implausible in this context. Consequently, if this meaning is unsuitable for this verse, it is equally unsuitable for the verse we are currently examining.

Among the various interpretations, one particularly problematic

perspective posits that 'the Spirit' refers to human spirits. This viewpoint implies that no angel descends without also accompanying the spirit of a person. This interpretation, attributed to Mujāhid, is evidently flawed and lacks credibility.

And when it is stated: *to whomever He wishes of His servants* (16:2), this implies that the sending of messengers and the descent of angels with a spirit from His command to them is solely dependent upon the divine will, and no force can overpower His will nor compel Him to this task or prevent Him from it, just as in all His other actions there is none who can coerce or forbid Him; rather, everything He does is by His will and decree.

Therefore, what we have said—that nothing and no one compels Him—does not contradict the fact that His actions are based on wisdom and expediency and are responsive to the varying capacities of individual human beings. They are not issued except in accordance with the preparedness and suitability of the recipient. Just as the pleas of a beggar attract the generosity and kindness of the passerby without compelling him to give anything, so too does the readiness of the human being draws nearer the effusion of God Almighty's grace, while the unprepared person remains deprived. Thus, God Almighty does what He wills without being compelled or prevented from performing His actions, and at the same time, He performs no act and bestows no mercy except according to the capacity and suitability of the recipient.

And this meaning is conveyed by the verses of the Qur'an concerning the grace of prophethood, as it says: *And when a sign comes to them, they say, 'We will not believe until we are given the like of what was given to Allah's messengers.' Allah knows best where to place His messengership! Soon the guilty will be visited by a degradation before Allah and a severe punishment because of the plots they used to devise* (6:124). For the verse clearly indicates that subjects vary in their acceptance of the honor of prophethood, and God is most knowledgeable about who deserves and is fit for prophethood. These scheming criminals do not possess the eligibility for prophethood and the performance of miracles; on the contrary, they are subjected to abasement and severe punishment before God because they are wrongdoers and deceitful.

This shows that just because the descent of angels upon prophets is dependent on God's will, it does not follow that the selection and choosing

of messengers is without regard for their individual merits and readiness to receive God's grace.

On this basis the fallacy of the claim made by some commentators becomes apparent, as they have argued with this verse in question that, in the matter of prophethood, no preference or capability is a condition because the verse has made prophethood solely contingent on the will of God and has not attached any other stipulation to it. Therefore, a messenger attains his mission by the will of God alone, not because he is distinguished by qualities that make him capable and prepared to receive it or give him precedence over others, since God Almighty is not bound by anything (even the acquired merit of a messenger) in His actions. The fallacy of this statement becomes apparent from what we have already discussed

Similar to the above-mentioned case is the argument that the verse demonstrates that prophethood is a divine gift, rather than something acquired through a person's effort. This is because, in the execution of His will, God does not differentiate between prophethood and non-prophethood, or gifted matters and acquired matters. Acquired affairs also materialize by the will of God, and nothing in the world comes into existence without His permission.

The phrase, *'Warn* (andhirū) *the people that* (anna-hu) *there is no god except Me; so* (fa) *be wary of Me'* is an explanation for *He sends down the angels with the Spirit*, because this phrase either pertains to revelation or explains the nature of the Spirit—assuming that Spirit here means revelation—and *indhār* ('warning') implies informing someone of something that includes an element of fear, just as giving glad tidings means informing of something that includes an element of joy. Al-Rāghib has interpreted it in this manner, but other lexicographers have said that *indhār* means announcing danger. According to al-Rāghib's explanation, the verse's meaning would be: 'Inform them, while instilling fear in them, of My oneness in divinity and make them aware of the necessity of being wary of Me.' According to the explanation of the others, the verse's meaning would be: 'Declare to them that there is no god but Me...'; in this case, the word *anna-hu* serves as a second object to the verb '*warn*' rather than being in a state of being affected by omission of a preposition as in the first interpretation.

From the above explanation, it is evident that the consequential

preposition '*fa*' ('then') in the phrase 'so fear Me' indicates that this phrase follows on from 'there is no deity except Me', and both phrases are in the position of a second object or as a substitute for the second object for '*warn*' (the first object being '*the people*') This meaning becomes even clearer when we consider that the essence of His divinity is that every being starts from Him and ends with Him, or that He is the only deity worthy of being worshiped. The necessary implication of His being the rightful deity is that creation should fear Him, since all goodness and happiness ultimately depend upon Him. Therefore, if we consider Him to be utterly alone in His divinity, without any partner, it follows that we should fear only Him. This is because *taqwā* ('Godwariness'), which is defined as the rectification of one's actions, is contingent upon the rectification of one's beliefs and opinions. Belief in multiple deities and belief in their worship is inconsistent with the belief in a unique, peerless deity who sustains everything and holds dominion over all things.

Hence, we observe that no prophet was solely tasked with calling their people to monotheism without concern for their deeds, nor were they solely focused on reforming their actions without regard to their beliefs. The verses of the Qur'an clearly states: '*And We did not send any messenger before you but We revealed to him that there is no deity except Me, so worship Me*' (21:25).

Therefore, what the prophets warned against involves deviation in both belief and in action. Indeed, their warning encompasses both aspects: the declaration of God's oneness ('there is no god except Me') and the call to righteousness and fear of God ('so be wary of Me'). The matters of belief are all included in the phrase 'there is no deity except Me', and practical issues are encompassed within the command to be wary of God.

Hence, we should not pay attention to those who claim that the phrase calling people to be wary of God is addressed only to those disbelievers who were hastening His punishment in the preceding verse, or that it is solely related to the disbelievers of Quraysh and has no relevance to the warnings of the Messenger of God.

خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ تَعَالَى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٣﴾

(16:3) He created the heavens and the earth in truth. He is above having any partners that they ascribe to Him.

The meaning of the heavens and the earth being created 'in truth' implies that their creation was not for falsehood, and not even the slightest falsehood is to be associated with them. Thus, we see the aforementioned statement followed by a declaration of God's transcendence above any partners they ascribe to Him, which they call upon for intercession in the hopes that these partners would guide them toward good and protect them from evil. Certainly, these associates are among the falsehoods that have no place in God's dominion or in the creation of the heavens and the earth.

This verse and the following ones argue for God's utter oneness in divinity through both His creation and providence. These two aspects differ because creation and the existence of cosmic signs point to God's divinity, while the benefit that some creatures provide for others points to His lordship and governance. A being becomes a benefit to another only when there is some form of connection and attachment between the two, a connection that establishes a system between them—and a unified system is indicative of a unified governance. The unity of this governance signifies the unity of the Governor. Thus, the fact that all beings in the heavens and on earth are a benefit to humans is itself evidence that God Almighty alone is the Lord of humanity and the Lord of everything.

خَلَقَ الإِنسَانَ مِن نُّطْفَةٍ فَإِذَا هُوَ خَصِيمٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿٤﴾

(16:4) He created man from a drop of seminal fluid, and, behold, he is an open contender (*khaṣīm mubīn*)!

The reference to the creation of mankind in this verse pertains to the general process of human generation which begins from seminal fluid. Therefore, the fact that Adam, the father of mankind, and Jesus son of Mary, were not created from sperm does not contradict this verse.

The purpose of mentioning that the creation of man is from an insignificant drop of fluid is to highlight the audacity and shamelessness of human beings in challenging God.

The word *khaṣīm* ('contender') is a participle derived from *khuṣūma* ('dispute') and signifies one who is argumentative. While this verse could be interpreted as highlighting the grace God has bestowed upon humans by transforming them from an abject drop of fluid into complete beings capable of communication and thought about all things great and small,

many verses of the Qur'an that deal with this subject are, in fact, aimed at highlighting human shamelessness in challenging God: *Does not man see that We created him from a drop of seminal fluid, and, behold, he is an open contender?* (36:77). Therefore, it is more fitting to interpret this verse as aiming to expose the impudence and audacity of humans, chastising them for their shamelessness, particularly as this verse follows the one that sanctifies God from the idol worshipers' association of partners with Him.

وَالأَنْعَامَ خَلَقَهَا لَكُمْ فِيهَا دِفْءٌ وَمَنَافِعُ وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ ﴿٥﴾

(16:5) And the cattle (*an'ām*), He created them, in which there is warmth (*dif'un*) for you and other uses and some of them you eat.

The term *an'ām* is the plural of '*ni'am*,' which refers to camels, cows, and sheep. These animals are called '*an'ām*' because their skin and hair are soft, in contrast to '*ḥāfir*' animals, whose skin is coarse. This is the explanation provided by al-Ṭabrisī in *Majma' al-Bayān*. Al-Rāghib also states in *al-Mufradāt* that the word *dif'un* signifies the opposite of cold, meaning warmth. It appears that the intended meaning of warmth here is the heat that these animals provide through their skins and wool, protecting against the cold, or it could be a reference to the heat generated within the body.

The *manāfi'* mentioned are the other uses derived from these animals, such as their milk, meat, hides, and other advantages. The phrase '*for you*' in the present verse could be linked to '*He created*,' with the phrase '*in which there is warmth and benefits*' qualifying the pronoun 'them' in '*He has created them*.' It is also possible that '*for you*' is the specification for the latter clause, meaning the phrase '*in them, there is warmth*' and that the full meaning in that case would be 'in the cattle there is warmth for you.'

وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا جَمَالٌ حِينَ تُرِيحُونَ وَحِينَ تَسْرَحُونَ ﴿٦﴾

(16:6) There is in them a beauty for you when you bring them home for rest (*turīḥūn*) and when you drive them forth to pasture (*tasraḥūn*).

This verse indicates that livestock offer an aesthetic appeal and pleasant aspect. In *Majma' al-Bayān*, al-Ṭabrisī says that *turīḥun* ('bring ... home for rest') derives from the term *irāḥa*, which means to return the herd or

flock from grazing to their home at dusk for rest; hence, the place where animals rest is called a '*marāḥ*.' Additionally, the term *tasraḥūn* ('when you drive them forth to pasture') comes from the root '*saraḥa*,' referring to the release of animals from their pens to the grazing fields at dawn.

Here, God Almighty declares that in the livestock and quadrupeds, there are two moments of beauty and pleasant scenery: one when the animals are driven out toward the fields in the morning, and the other when they are brought back toward the dwelling in the evening.

وَتَحْمِلُ أَثْقَالَكُمْ إِلَى بَلَدٍ لَّمْ تَكُونُواْ بَالِغِيهِ إِلاَّ بِشِقِّ الأَنفُسِ إِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ لَرَؤُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٧﴾

(16:7) And they bear your burdens (*athqāl*) to towns which you could not reach except by straining yourselves. Indeed your Lord is most kind and merciful.

The term *athqāl* ('burdens') is the plural of *thaql*, which means 'a heavy burden'. '*straining yourselves*' refers to the hardship endured by people in transporting loads over long distances and across challenging paths.

The meaning here is that livestock, such as camels and oxen, transport the heavy loads of humans to a city that would be difficult to carry without them. Without camels and oxen, reaching that city would impose a degree of hardship on people that would be difficult for their souls to bear. Through the creation of camels and oxen and making them subject to humans, God has lifted this burden from humanity, showing that God is Kind and Merciful toward people.

وَالْخَيْلَ وَالْبِغَالَ وَالْحَمِيرَ لِتَرْكَبُوهَا وَزِينَةً وَيَخْلُقُ مَا لاَ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨﴾

(16:8) And horses, mules and asses, for you to ride them, and for adornment, and He creates what you do not know.

This clause is connected to the term 'cattle' in the previous verse (16:5), with the meaning: 'And He created horses, mules, and donkeys for you to ride and to serve as an adornment'—horses, mules, and donkeys were also created for you to ride upon and to serve as ornaments for you. This latter statement suggests that the creation of these animals is linked to your benefits, as you ride on them and take them as a source of beauty

and ornamentation.

...and He creates what you do not know—this means that God creates things of which you are unaware, and He has subjugated them to you so that you may benefit from them. The context of the verses serves as evidence for the explanations we have drawn from this verse.

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وَعَلَى اللَّهِ قَصْدُ السَّبِيلِ وَمِنْهَا جَائِرٌ وَلَوْ شَاءَ لَهَدَاكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٩﴾

(16:9) With Allah rests guidance to the straight path (*qaṣd al-sabīl*), and some of them are devious (*wa min-hā jā'ir*), and had He wished He would have guided you all.

The term *qaṣd*, according to al-Rāghib and others, signifies the straightness of the path, meaning that the path should be direct in conveying its traveler to their goal. While *qaṣd* is technically a verbal noun, it is used here in the sense of an active participle, and its addition to the word *sabīl* ('path;) denotes a qualitative relationship, implying that what is meant by the 'direction of the path' (a literal translation of *qaṣd al-sabīl*) is, in fact, 'directing path' (*al-sabīl al-qāṣid*) as opposed to the term 'straying' (*jā'ir*), which means for a path deviate from the proper goal and lead the traveler away from their intended destination.

The intended meaning behind the statement, *With Allah rests guidance to the straight path,* is that God has a self-imposed obligation to delineate a direct and straight path for His servants, one that leads them to happiness and success. Since there is no ruler other than God who can impose this obligation upon Him, He has made it incumbent upon Himself to establish a way for His servants and guide them toward Him, and He has indeed done so.

Establishing the path in this way means equipping every being, including humans, with the necessary faculties which, if employed correctly, will lead them to their intended perfection and desired happiness, as the verses of the Qur'an states: '*He said, 'Our Lord is He who gave everything its creation and then guided it'* (20:50). And concerning humans specifically, it states: *So set your heart on the religion as a people of pure faith, the origination of Allah according to which He originated mankind. There is no altering Allah's creation; that is the upright religion, but most people do not know* (30:30).

Guidance, then, consists of the inspirations bestowed upon humans from two sources: one is their innate nature (*fiṭra*), and the other is through the sending of messengers (*baʿth al-rusul*), the revelation of scriptures, and the establishment of laws. The Qur'an says concerning the first source: *by the soul and Him who fashioned it, and inspired it with its virtues and vices* (91:8) and regarding the second source, it says: *Indeed We have guided him to the way, be he grateful or ungrateful* (76:3).

In the context of guidance, God Almighty has strategically positioned this verse amidst other verses that enumerate the blessings humankind receives from the heavens and earth, including cattle, horses, mules, donkeys, rain descending from the sky, crops, and the like. This placement is intentional because the discussions in two verses culminate in the themes of journeying and riding beasts of burden. Thus, it is fitting to allude to the spiritual paths that lead humanity to their ultimate truth and the perfection they seek in the course of life.

Hence, what God says in this verse is: 'One of the bounties that God has graciously bestowed upon His servants is that He has made it incumbent upon Himself to demonstrate the middle path to them so that they may attain the bliss of their lives and be guided to their Lord.'

Notice that, in this verse, God has attributed the straight path (*qaṣd al-sabīl*) to Himself but has not associated the deviant path with Him. This is because deviation (*jāʾir*) represents the path of misguidance, which is not established by God but rather represents a departure from the straight path of guidance that He has laid out for human beings. Therefore, the deviant path, in essence, is not an actual path so much as straying from it.

Therefore, the verse clearly attributes the straight path to God while not associating the latter path with Him. Since the straight path—attributed to God—leads one to God, we understand that the deviant path, not attributed to Him, does not lead to God. It is, in fact, a deviation from the path.

There might arise a misconception that by establishing such a path, God has paradoxically allowed Himself to be defied by His creation and rendered His own blessings unappreciated by humans, as we observe that most people do not tread this path and have not found guidance through it. Had He not established such a path, His servants would not have rebelled. Hence, it seems as though God has been overpowered in His own scheme

by His servants. To counter such an assumption, an additional clause is added: ... *and had He wished He would have guided you all*. This means that if the majority do not follow God's path, it is not due to any deficiency on the part of the Divine or any dominance over Him. It is rather because God has chosen not to impose guidance upon them, for if He had so willed, He could have guided everyone such that none would have had the ability to deviate from the right path, as God is, in every situation, the Supreme and the Dominant.

In other words, the deliberate path that God has established is one built upon human freewill, where individuals navigate their way through life of their own volition, performing righteous deeds and avoiding sins by choice. Such a path cannot be based on compulsion, nor can it be universal, because the temperaments of individuals vary, and their constitutive make-up differs from one person to another. Consequently, the effects of these varied natures and compositions are also different, leading to differences among people in faith and disbelief, piety, and debauchery, obedience and sin.

This verse is one of those that sparked an intense debate between two groups within the Muslim community—the Ashʿarī and the Muʿtazilī schools of thought. The Muʿtazilī theologians have used this verse to argue that some matters can be attributed to God and others cannot, because the verse attributes the path of righteousness to God, but not the path of injustice. This argument is mentioned by al-Zamakhsharī in his *Tafsīr al-Kashshāf*.

In response, the Ashʿarī theologians have spared no effort to refute this reading of the present verse. One scholar has stated that both paths originate from God, and if the path of injustice is not attributed to Him, it is merely out of respect for God. Another has said that the phrase *With Allah rests guidance to the straight path* means that God's grace and generosity lead Him to extend the path of truth and not to expound the path of falsehood and deviance, though, in principle, both paths originate with none other than God Almighty. Yet another scholar has denied that the change in style within the verse indicates anything at all.

However the truth, as we have already explained, is that the path of error is, in reality, not a path at all, but a non-existent matter. Therefore, the Muʿtazilī and Ashʿarī debates over the permissibility of attributing the

creation of it to God are moot. This is because the verse clearly indicates that the path of righteousness is attributed to God, and the path of injustice is not, but this does not necessarily imply that the path of injustice is the creation of some other being. As we have said, the path of injustice and the way of deviance is, in reality, not a path at all; rather, if we look closely, it is a non-existent matter, and a non-entity cannot be created (indeed, it does not need to be created, as it does not exist), so there is no point in debating who has established this misguidance and deviation. And if in some instances misguidance by the misled is attributed to God, it merely signifies a lack of His leading them to the right path, not his directing them to some alternate path.

In the present passage, the matter under discussion is the divine decree of misguidance and guidance, which has also been addressed in the verses: *Indeed Allah leads astray whomever He wishes, and guides whomever He wishes* (35:8) and *Thereby He leads many astray, and thereby He guides many* (2:26). In response to the question of why some are guided while others are led astray, it is articulated that the act of leading astray is a form of retribution for the deeds that merit misguidance, rather than a foregone decree that they should be misguided. This interpretation is reinforced by the phrase *and He leads no one astray thereby except the transgressors* (2:26), which shows that when a person engages in evil deeds and chooses of their own freewill to stray from the path of servitude to God by disobeying God and not repenting for his misdeeds, this marks the beginning of a self-initiated course of misguidance. It originates from the individual and is attributable to them. Should the person not turn back from such a path, God enforces this state of misguidance as a form of punishment, merely affirming the path of error that they had already set themselves upon through their choices in life.

The reason we argue that misguidance begins with the individual is because God has provided guidance through the innate nature of human beings and through the messages of prophets, teaching humanity the right path. Therefore, if someone loses their way despite this, it can only be by their own doing.

هُوَ الَّذِى أَنزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاء مَاء لَّكُم مِّنْهُ شَرَابٌ وَمِنْهُ شَجَرٌ فِيهِ
تُسِيمُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

(16:10) It is He who sends down water from the sky: from it (*min-hu*) you get your drink and from it (*min-hu*) are sustained the plants (*shajar*) wherein you pasture your herds (*tusīmūn*).

This verse shifts to discussion about another form of God's blessings, referring to the vegetation which sustains both humans and animals. It enumerates factors involved in their growth, such as the darkness of night, the light of day, the sun, and the moon, and other things. This change from the previous sequence is signified by the fact that God says *It is He who sends down water from the sky …*, whereas if it were following directly the previous sequence, it should have stated simply '… and sends down water from the sky.'

The verb *tusīmūn* derives from the root *isāma,* which means to graze one's livestock. An animal that grazes by itself without the need for provided fodder is called a *sā'ima*.

In this verse, the prepositional phrase 'from it' (*min-hu*) appears twice: initially to denote distinction, and subsequently to indicate origin or source. The term *shajar* refers to all plants which have a stem and leaves, and then by extension, is used to encompass all plants—both with and without a stem—as it is employed in this verse, stating: *are sustained the plants* (shajar) *wherein you pasture your herds*. The remainder of the verse's meaning is clear.

يُنبِتُ لَكُم بِهِ الزَّرْعَ وَالزَّيْتُونَ وَالنَّخِيلَ وَالأَعْنَابَ وَمِن كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ
إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿١١﴾

(16:11) With it He makes the crops grow for you and olives (*zaytūn*), date palms (*nakhīl*), vines, and fruits of all kinds (*min kulli al-thamarāt*). There is indeed a sign in that for a people who reflect.

The term *zaytūn* ('olives') can be used to refer to both the tree and its fruit. Some have said that the term *zaytūn* is a collective noun, and its singular form is *zaytuna*. Similarly, the term *nakhīl* ('date palms') is used in both singular and plural forms, with its singular being *nakhīla*. The term *a'nāb* is the plural of *'inaba*, which means grapes or the fruit of the vine. This term also applies to both the vine and its fruit.

The context indicates that the phrase *min kulli al-thamarāt* ('and fruits of all kinds') means: 'He causes to grow for you the trees of all the fruits'. The specific mention of these three fruits, while referring to all others generally, might be due to the fact that these three fruits were the ones most commonly used as food. Given that this universal and comprehensive plan—which includes both humans and animals benefiting from these fruits and plants—is a testament to the uniqueness of God in providence, the noble verse concludes by saying: *There is indeed a sign in that for a people who reflect.*

وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ وَالنُّجُومُ مُسَخَّرَاتٌ بِأَمْرِهِ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

(16:12) He disposed the night and the day for you, and the sun, the moon and the stars are disposed by His command. There are indeed signs in that for a people who apply reason.

Throughout this book, we have extensively explored the concepts surrounding the regulation of night and day, as well as celestial entities like the sun and moon. Each of these elements—be it individually like the sun, moon, and stars, or collectively like the phenomena of night and day—exhibits unique properties and produces specific effects. These attributes and effects individually testify to God's uniqueness in Lordship. Consequently, in the verse under scrutiny, God intentionally concludes with the phrase, "*there are indeed signs in that for a people who apply reason*," using the plural form 'signs.' This is in contrast to the neighboring verses, where the singular form is employed, highlighting the multitude and diversity of these evidences.

وَمَا ذَرَأَ لَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُخْتَلِفًا أَلْوَانُهُ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَذَّكَّرُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

(16:13) And whatever He has created (*dhara'a*) for you in the earth of diverse hues (*mukhtalifan alwānu-hu*)—there is indeed a sign in that for a people who take admonition

The verb *dhara'a* is synonymous with *khalaqa*, and *mukhtalif*

alwānu-hu denotes the variation in the colors of minerals and other elemental compounds that have been created from the earth and from which humans benefit. It is not far-fetched to suggest that the variation in colors may be a metaphor for variation in types, and in that sense, the discussed verse is closely related in meaning to the verse: *In the earth are neighboring terrains and vineyards, farms, and date palms growing from the same root and from diverse roots, irrigated by the same water, and We give some of them an advantage over others in flavor. There are indeed signs in that for a people who apply reason* (13:4), about which we have made a similar argument.

The diversity of colors in what He has created on Earth—such as plants, trees, and fruits—is something through which one can reason about the unity and uniqueness of God in His lordship. Since it is a singular matter, it is therefore said: 'a sign' (*āya*, singular), and not 'signs' (*ayāt*, plural).

There are three types of argument presented here, the first is attributed to *people who reflect* (alladhīna yatafakkarūn), the second to *people who apply reason* (alladhīna yaʿqilūn), and the third to *people who take admonition* (alladhīna yatadhakkarūn). The reason for this is that the first argument is composed of simple premises, where mere reflection is sufficient to draw conclusions. However, the second is made up of scientific premises, which can only be understood by scholars who are knowledgeable about the celestial bodies and the secrets of the Earth. Only someone who knows the movements and transitions of celestial bodies and the effects of these movements can draw conclusions from this evidence. The third is composed of general and philosophical premises, from which only those who are mindful of universal principles can deduce and thereby affirm the unity of God in His lordship. For example, they understand that a world which is constantly changing necessarily requires a cause, and they know that all materials ultimately reduce to one common and similar substance, and they recognize that all differences in materials must lead back to something beyond material, which exists beyond this substance.

وَهُوَ الَّذِى سَخَّرَ الْبَحْرَ لِتَأْكُلُواْ مِنْهُ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا وَتَسْتَخْرِجُواْ مِنْهُ حِلْيَةً تَلْبَسُونَهَا وَتَرَى الْفُلْكَ مَوَاخِرَ فِيهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُواْ مِن فَضْلِهِ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

(16:14) It is He who disposed the sea for your benefit that you may eat from it fresh (*tariyyan*) meat, and obtain from it ornaments, which you wear—and you see the ships plowing through it (*mawākhir fī-hā*)—and that you may seek of His grace, and that you may give thanks.

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This verse enumerates yet another category of God's blessings, which includes the seas, mountains, cities, roads, and signs, just as in the previous section, which counted the blessings of the deserts, plains, trees, fruits, and the like. Thus, it is said: *It is He who disposed...* and not 'and disposed...'

The word *ṭarīyyan* ('fresh'), on the pattern of *fa'īl*, derives from the root of *ṭarāwa* ('freshness'), which, according to al-Rāghib's *Mufradāt*, means moist and fresh in any context.

The latter term *mawākhir* is the broken plural of *mākhira*, which is derived from *makhr*, which means 'to cleave water apart', as in 'the ship cleaved the water,' meaning the ship split the water apart, left and right. For this reason, a ship is sometimes referred to as '*mākhira*.' In *Majma' al-Bayān*, al-Ṭabrisī mentions that the verb *makhara* can also be used in the sense of to split the earth for agriculture. The intent behind eating fresh meat from the sea refers to consuming fish that is caught from it, and the extraction of ornaments for adornment refers to pearls and corals that are retrieved from the sea and with which women beautify themselves.

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... and you see the ships plowing through it—This means you observe the ships splitting the sea waters to their left and right. It is plausible that when it is said 'you see,' it is not addressing anyone specific, but rather is a general address meant for any observer, anyone who possesses the ability to perceive this scene. Hence, this is not an address to the Prophet Muḥammad, so it cannot be claimed that there is a transition from plural to singular in the verse.

... and that you may seek of His grace, and that you may give thanks—This implies that you might seek some of God's provision through sea voyages and the launching of ships. This clause is connected to a preceding implied sentence, which can be reconstructed as follows: 'And you see the ships plowing through it so that you may achieve such and such and that you might seek...'. The use of such styles of connection in the Qur'an is very common.

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... and that you may give thanks—This means another result of the

subjugation of the sea and the launching of ships is that you may be grateful. The bounties of the sea are an additional grace from God Almighty, given that God has already provided enough blessings on land such that humanity does not need the sea's resources. Nevertheless, God bestowed these additional blessings and subjected the seas to humanity, so they might be grateful. This is because humans tend to be less aware of God's blessings in their everyday necessities and it is often forgotten that these life necessities are indeed blessings from God. If He so willed, He could withdraw them at any moment. This is unlike the excess bounties, such as those of the sea, which make humans more aware of God's grace when they encounter them.

وَأَلْقَى فِي الْأَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ أَن تَمِيدَ بِكُمْ وَأَنْهَارًا وَسُبُلًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

(16:15) He cast in the earth firm mountains lest it should shake with you (*an tamīda bi-kum*), and made streams and ways, so that you may be guided

In *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, al-Ṭabrisī writes: 'The verb *tamīda* comes from *mayda*, meaning to rock to the left and right in a disturbed state.'

The meaning of the phrase, *lest it should shake with you*, is that: 'If God has placed mountains upon the earth to prevent it from swaying you to and fro, it is to avoid the disruption of your lives by such instability of the earth.'

And made streams—meaning, He has made rivers flow so that you may easily bring water to your agriculture and orchards, and quench your domestic animals.

... and ways so that you may be guided—This phrase is a continuation from the previous mention of rivers, meaning that God has established ways toward the goal of guidance that is expected of you. These paths are sometimes natural, like the routes between two lands which connect them without any barrier interrupting, like a plain situated between two mountains; and others are man-made, such as a path which forms naturally due to frequent travel, or roads that humans construct intentionally.

From the context, it appears that the term '*ways*' includes all types of way, encompassing both natural and man-made paths, and there is no problem with attributing those ways made by humans to God. This is

because we see in these verses that rivers and landmarks are also attributed to God, even though it is often humans who construct rivers and signs. Just as we see idols carved by human hands attributed to God, calling them God's creation, as it is said: *when Allah has created you and whatever you make* (37:96).

The reason for this is that all these things, whatever they may be, are the effects of God's creation, and it is God who has created them and made them able to produce such effects. Of course, the creation in the aforementioned examples is a mediated one, meaning God has created these things, but through the mediation of human hands.

وَعَلَامَاتٍ وَبِالنَّجْمِ هُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٦﴾

(16:16) —and the landmarks (*ʿalāmāt*) as well, and by the stars they are guided.

The term *ʿalāmāt* ('landmarks') is the plural of *ʿalāma*, which refers to something that makes something known. This term is connected to the term '*rivers*' in the previous verse, meaning that God has placed marks by which you may infer things that are beyond your direct sensory perception. These marks include all natural and conventional signs, each indicating a particular meaning, such as indicators, words, gestures, lines, and the like, which signify something either naturally or by convention.

The Sublime God then mentions finding one's way by the stars, saying: '*And by the stars, they are guided*.' Although the discourse could have continued to be in the second person, a third person verb is used here to avoid repeating the phrase '*you .. guided*' from the previous verse.

The preceding verse, *With Allah rests guidance to the straight path, and some of them are devious, and had He wished He would have guided you all* (16:9), addresses the question of spiritual guidance amidst a series of verses about physical and manifest blessings, taking on the form of an interjected sentence. It would seem fitting to place this after the verse, *And by the stars, they are guided* ..., which is related to physical guidance, as it is appropriate to discuss spiritual guidance after physical guidance. However, to avoid confusion and any suggestion of there being a contradiction between these two kinds of guidance, it is placed here, and even though it takes the form of an interjection, it is, nonetheless, appropriately positioned.

From the above discourse, the Qur'an now turns to expound the three pillars of divinity and lordship, namely, that God alone is the Creator, the Bestower of blessings, and the Knower of the inner and outer aspects of human beings.

أَفَمَن يَخْلُقُ كَمَن لاَّ يَخْلُقُ أَفَلا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

(16:17) Is He who creates like one who does not create? Will you not then take admonition?

The next verses summarize the details of the argument presented above in order to draw a conclusion from them. The previous sixteen verses established a detailed argument for the oneness and totality of God's Lordship, of which this verse is a summary. It states: God Almighty is the creator of all things. Thus, He is the one who has bestowed countless blessings, without which the order of the universe which cannot possibly be maintained, and is the One who knows everything about humankind's outward and inward aspects. Therefore, He is the sole Master of everything, the sole Governor of all affairs, and He is the Sustainer of all. None of these false deities that the idol worshipers have created possess any of these attributes. Hence, none of them have lordship, and the only deity in existence is one, and no other, and that is the Noble God.

From this point, the misconception mentioned by some commentators becomes evident, when they assert that these verses establish the concept of monotheism through two approaches: the path of creation and the path of blessings. The flaw in this explanation is that the path of creation only affirms the oneness of the Creator and Maker, which even the idolaters accept. There is no need to prove the oneness of the Maker in discussions with them, because they neither deny the existence of God nor the fact that God is the creator of everything, including their idols. They acknowledge that their idols create nothing; rather, they attribute a share in divine providence to them on the basis that they claimed God had delegated the management of the world and the role of intercession to these idols. Against such people, what is the benefit of proving the existence of the Maker?

Therefore, the intent of these verses is not to establish the existence of the Maker. And if blessings are mentioned, it is to reaffirm the existence

of these blessings, because when one accepts that God is the creator of everything, it follows that the effects of His creations, which are the blessings we enjoy, also come from God. He is the one who has provided us with all these blessings. Since the existence of these blessings is from Him and under His dominion, and since His ownership is neither voided nor transferred to another nor subject to change, He and He alone is our true benefactor. No other being has a share in being the benefactor, not even the blessings themselves, for their beneficial nature does not originate from themselves; they will not be considered our benefactors because both they and their effects are rightfully the property of God alone.

For this reason, God Almighty does not limit Himself to the matters of creation and blessing alone in these verse. After all, if these two elements alone were enough to persuade humans to humble themselves and worship the Creator and the Provider of blessings, then people would have felt the need to worship the clouds that send rain. Instead, He also included the matter of providence and added the verse, *Allah knows whatever you hide and whatever you disclose*, to teach us that the creator and benefactor worthy of worship must also be all-knowing. Thus, He guides each of His creations toward their intended perfection, showing them the path to the prosperity that He has destined for them. It is evident that worship is only true worship when the deity is aware of its worshiper's devotion, witnessing their submission and humility.

Hence, both sets of verses—the ones concerning creation and those concerning blessings—are collectively a single argument presented to affirm God's oneness and sole lordship over the universe, to make idol worshipers and idolaters who deny this truth desist from their denial.

Thus, when the Qur'an says: *Is He who creates like one who does not create? Will you not then take admonition?*, it is comparing the attributes of God with those of others to make it clear that no being other than Him can ever hope to be a deity, and God's attributes are not equal to those of beings beside Him. The question posed here is a rhetorical with the force of a denial, and those who do not create, referred to here, are the false deities they worshiped and invoked besides God.

As elucidated in the preceding discussion, the essence of this concept is that God Almighty is the creator and sustainer of all beings. Consequently, His status is incomparable to any entity that does not create. God not

only initiates the existence of beings but also owns them and governs their effects. These effects are pivotal, influencing both the intrinsic order of the beings themselves and the broader cosmic order.

وَإِن تَعُدُّواْ نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ لاَ تُحْصُوهَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَغَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٨﴾

(16:18) If you enumerate Allah's blessings, you will not be able to count them. Indeed Allah is all-forgiving, all-merciful.

The verse draws attention to the vastness and multitude of God's blessings, underscoring that they are innumerable for a person. In essence, every being in existence constitutes a blessing within the grand scheme of the cosmos, although some beings might not be perceived as blessings in relation to others.

God Almighty explains this abundance of blessings from Him by stating: *Indeed Allah is all-forgiving, all-merciful* (16:18). This is among the subtlest and most precise of rationalizations, for with this expression it is understood that the innumerability of blessings springs from the blessings of His two attributes of forgiveness and mercy. With His forgiveness or *maghfira*—which means to conceal—He covers the shortcomings and deficiencies of things, and with His mercy or *raḥma*, which refers to the completion of what is lacking and the removal of need from another, He manifests the goodness and perfection of each thing and adorns it with the ornament of His beauty. Therefore, His forgiveness and mercy extend to all existent beings, for anything that becomes good and beneficial for something else, consequently, counts as a blessing toward it. Hence, some things are blessings relative to others. Ultimately, the blessing of God has the same expansiveness and universality as His forgiveness and mercy. It is for this reason that He states: *If you enumerate Allah's blessings, you will not be able to count them*.

This verse is among those where God's forgiveness is invoked without any mention of sin, which in the common religious parlance is defined as an act of disobedience to the commands of the Lord.

وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُسِرُّونَ وَمَا تُعْلِنُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

(16:19) Allah knows whatever you hide and whatever you disclose.

The Qur'an next addresses the third pillar of God's Lordship: knowledge.[1] The attribute of knowledge is essential for a deity; without it, the distinction between worship and disregard by the servants becomes irrelevant, rendering their devotion meaningless and without consequence. Therefore, it is imperative for the worshiped Lord to be all-knowing, specifically aware of both the visible and the invisible aspects of His servants. The authenticity of worship hinges on the intent behind it, and an act qualifies as true worship only if it stems from a sincere intention, which resides within the inner consciousness of the servant. The genuine fulfillment of worship's purpose is acknowledged only when the Lord fully grasps both the external actions and the internal intentions of the servant. And God, who is exalted and glorified, perfectly perceives what is concealed and what is disclosed by man, just as He is the Creator and Provider. It is these roles of creation and provision that make Him rightfully worthy of worship.

The choice of wording in this verse, specifically highlighting God's awareness of what is concealed and what is revealed, sheds light on the profound nature of His knowledge. While it could have been phrased as 'God is the knower of the unseen and the seen,' or 'God is knowledgeable of all things,' the verse deliberately states: *Allah knows whatever you hide and whatever you disclose*.

This specific mention of God's cognizance of hidden thoughts and visible actions pertains directly to the context of human worship. Worship involves not just the physical actions and utterances but also the innermost thoughts and feelings of the worshiper. In this realm of devotion, where both the external practices and the internal sincerity are integral, it is crucial that the deity comprehends every aspect—both the visible actions and the hidden intentions. This comprehensive knowledge is what allows the true essence and worth of the worship to be fully recognized and valued.

وَالَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ لاَ يَخْلُقُونَ شَيْئًا وَهُمْ يُخْلَقُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾

(16:20) Those whom they invoke besides Allah do not create anything and are themselves created.

This points to the absence of the first pillar of lordship in the idols

1 The first pillar of Lordship is creation of things while the second pillar is the bestowal of blessings. (Ed.)

and false gods of the polytheists. Since they lack the first pillar of lordship—the creation of things—they inherently lack the second pillar as well—the bestowal of blessings—which is derived from the first, as this too is a creative act.

For this reason, the deities of the polytheists are not gods or lords; rather, it is the only God Almighty who is the true Lord.

أَمْوَاتٌ غَيْرُ أَحْيَاء وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ أَيَّانَ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

(16:21) They are dead, not living, and are not aware when they will be resurrected.

This highlights the absence of the third pillar of lordship in the idols of the polytheists, which is knowledge of the hidden and the manifest aspects of their devotees. In this denial, there is an emphasis to the extent of negating life and existence itself, which implies the absence of any knowledge whatsoever, to say nothing of the most perfect form of it, which is the knowledge of the outward and inward nature of humans, and which is what God Almighty possesses. The Qur'an states: *They are dead, not living*, first affirming their death, which never aligns with consciousness or awareness, then emphasizing that state of death by negating life from them.

If, among all aspects of the idols' ignorance, the particular knowledge of when people will be resurrected is mentioned, it is relevant because the Day of Resurrection is when humans are rewarded, and it is incumbent upon a god who is worthy of worship to know the day when he will reward his servants. However, these idols are unaware of such a day, so how then can they be considered remotely worthy of worship?

From this, it becomes evident that the first pronoun, that is, the plural 'they' in *they … are not aware*, refers to the idols, wile the second pronoun, that is, the plural 'they' *when they will be resurrected*, refers to the polytheists. It is incorrect to interpret both pronouns as referring to the idols, as the knowledge of the Day of Resurrection is exclusive to the Most High God and hidden from others, and ignorance of it is not exclusive to the idols. More erroneous is the claim by those who have said that both pronouns refer to the polytheists. So reflect on this.

While at first glance the verses under discussion seem to negate the divinity of the idols, a closer examination reveals that the same argument

is also applicable to negating the divinity of the spirits that these idols are supposed to represent, namely the angels, jinn, holy men and women, celestial bodies, and any other deities that the pagans worship. This is because none of them are creators, benefactors, or intrinsically knowledgeable in of themselves. If they possess any of these qualities whatsoever, they do so through the Divine rather than themselves, as it is only the Lord is the one who inherently and independently holds these attributes. So reflect on this.

In these two verses—namely *Those whom they invoke besides Allah do not create anything and are themselves created. They are dead, not living, and are not aware when they will be resurrected*—there is a rhetorical shift from speaking directly to the audience to speaking in the third person, and it is perhaps intended to highlight that in both instances, the topics of the Resurrection and the Day of Judgment, both of which the polytheists deny, are discussed. Thus, the address turns to the Prophet of God to convey the message to them indirectly, so that it is introduced without providing an opportunity for them to object directly.

The statement 'Your God is One God' (in the following verse, 16:22) is a logical conclusion derived from the arguments laid out in the previous verses. It indicates that once it is established that only God Almighty meets the conditions of divinity and only His worship is worthwhile, while the deities the polytheists claim do not (and, indeed, cannot) meet these conditions—they are neither creators, benefactors, nor inherently knowledgeable—it logically follows that the one worthy of worship is indeed the Singular Deity. The implication of this statement is that such a deity must be exclusively identified with God Almighty.

Examining Narrations

(1) In *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, al-Ṭabrisī writes that forty verses from the beginning of this chapter are Meccan and the remainder, from *Those who migrate for the sake of Allah after they have been wronged, We will surely settle them in a good place in the world* ... (16:41) to the end of the chapter, are Medinan, as reported by Ḥasan and Qatāda. Some have said, with the exception of the last three verses, which pertain to the time when the Prophet returned from the Battle of Uḥud and begin with *And if you retaliate, retaliate with the like of what you have been made to suffer* ..., the rest

are Meccan, and those three verses were revealed between Mecca and Medina (as reported by Ibn ʿAbbās, ʿAtā', and al-Shaʿbī). In one tradition transmitted from Ibn ʿAbbās, it is stated that some verses are Meccan and others are Medinan; the Meccan verses run from the beginning of the chapter to the phrase ... *and there be a great punishment for you* (16:94), while the Medinan ones start from *Do not sell Allah's covenant for a paltry gain* ... (16:95) to ... *the best of what they used to do* (16:96).

Author's comment: We have previously stated that what is derived from the context and style of the verses contradicts all of these narrations.

(2) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, Hishām b. Sālim narrates from 'one of our companions' that he asked Imām al-Ṣādiq about the meaning of the verse: *Allah's edict is coming! So do not seek to hasten it* (16:1). He replied: 'When God informs His Prophet of a matter that is going to happen, *Allah's edict is coming! So do not seek to hasten it* until its appointed time arrives. When God informs us of something that is going to happen, it is as if it has already occurred.'

Author's comment: It appears that the use of the past tense 'it is as if it has already occurred' is to indicate the certainty of the event's occurrence and its inevitability.

(3) In *al-Durr al-manthūr*, al-Suyūṭī cites Ibn Mardawayh, who narrates from Ibn ʿAbbās, who said that when the verse, '*Allah's edict is coming!*, was revealed, the Companions of the Prophet became anxious until the phrase *So do not seek to hasten it* was revealed, which calmed them down.

(4) In the same source, al-Suyūṭī cites Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Mundhir from Ibn Jurayj, who said: 'When the verse, *Allah's edict is coming! So do not seek to hasten it*, was revealed, some of the hypocrites said to one another: "This man thinks that the edict of God has come, so stop some of the things you do until we see what this edict is!" And when they saw that nothing was sent down and no punishment came, they said: "Be assured that there will never be any punishment!" Then the verse, *Mankind's reckoning has drawn near to them, yet they are disregardful* ... (21:1) was revealed. They said: "This man has reverted to his former belief, and when they saw that no punishment came, they felt certain that no punishment

would ever come." Then the verse *And if We defer their punishment until a certain time, they will surely say, 'What holds it back?'* ... (11:8) was revealed.

Author's comment: This narration suggests that, even in Mecca, before the Emigration to Medina, there were some hypocrites among the Muslims. Other narrations also attest to this fact.

(5) In the same book, al-Suyūṭī reports from Ibn Abī Ḥātim, al-Ṭabarānī, Ibn Mardawayh, and al-Ḥākim, who declared the tradition authentic, on the authority of ʿUqba b. ʿĀmir, who said: 'The Messenger of God said: "Before the coming of the Day of Judgment, a dark cloud will rise from the west, resembling a shield, turning toward you and ascending continuously in the sky until it covers the entire expanse of heaven. Then a caller will cry out: 'O people!' People will turn to one another asking, 'Did you hear that voice?' Some will say, 'Yes, I heard it,' while others will doubt, until the caller cries out again: 'O people!' They will ask each other again, 'Did you hear that sound?' They will reply, 'Yes,' and then the proclamation will be made: 'O people! The command of God has come, so do not hasten it.'"

The Messenger of God added, "I swear by the One in whose hand my soul lies, He will not grant respite for two merchants who have unrolled a piece of cloth to fold it up again, or a man who is filling his trough to give water to someone or an animal, or a man who is milking his camel to drink from its milk, or anyone else who is occupied with their work to finish it."'

Author's comment: Some scholars have attempted to interpret these three reports—along with other narratives that have come down with similar meanings—to suggest that the coming divine edict refers to the Day of Resurrection. However, these reports do not contain any evidence to support such a reading of the verse.

As for the first report, mere anxiety does not prove that the Companions understood the divine edict in question to be the coming of the Day of Judgment, because it is possible that God's edict, whatever it may be, is something that prompts His servants to reflect. There is no clear evidence that they understood it in this way, nor is the ambiguity a matter of linguistic interpretation that should be referred back to the conventional usage

of language experts. Moreover, this report is not free from issues because God Almighty has described the hastening of the Day of Judgment a characteristic of the disbelievers, condemning them for this act and considering the believers to be free of it, and has stated: *but those who have faith are apprehensive of it*. We have already mentioned above that the phrase, *So do not seek to hasten*, *it* is addressed to the idol worshipers rather than the believers, and what it means is to reprimand them for their impatience and for demanding that the Prophet hasten their impending doom or invoke the punishment with which he had threatened them—it is not a request for respite or delay. Thus, it would not make sense for them to be calmed by hearing the words, *So do not seek to hasten it*.

The second narrative presented here seems to suggest that what was understood from God's edict was a worldly punishment, rather than the Day of Resurrection, thereby confirming our previous explanation rather than that of these other scholars.

As for the third narrative, at most what it indicates is that the coming of the Day of Resurrection is one of the instances of the coming of God's edict. No one doubts this in the least, but this is different from saying that the Resurrection is the intended meaning of the edict mentioned in the verse.

(6) In al-Nuʿmānī's *Kitāb al-Ghayba*, he narrates via his chain of transmission from ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Kathīr from Abū ʿAbd Allāh regarding the phrase, *Allah's edict is coming! So do not seek to hasten it*: 'This edict of God is our cause in which haste should not be made, and God supports our cause with three armies: The angels, the believers, and the riders, and his emergence is like the emergence of your Prophet, as the verse states: *Just As your Lord brought you out from your home with a just cause* (8:5).' Therefore, according to this narration, the edict mentioned in the verse refers to the advent of Imām al-Mahdī.

Author's comment: This narration has also been presented by Shaykh al-Mufīd in his book on the Occultation, from the same narrator, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, from the same Imām, and the intended meaning of 'his emergence' is the appearance of the Mahdī, which has been explicitly mentioned in other narrations. However, this falls under the category of applying a general verse to a specific instance or is one of the symbolic or allegorical

explanations of the Qur'an.

(7) In *al-Kāfī*, al-Kulaynī narrates through his chain of transmission from Sa'd al-Iskāf that a man came to the Commander of the Faithful and asked him about the Spirit, questioning whether or not it was Gabriel. He said: 'Gabriel is one of the angels, and the Spirit is something other than Gabriel.' Sa'd said: 'This response was difficult for the questioner to accept.' He said, 'You said something tremendous indeed that no one else has mentioned,' because no one considered that the Spirit could be other than Gabriel. The Commander of the Faithful said: 'You are a misguided man who repeats the utterances of the misguided. Have you not seen that God Almighty said to His Prophet: *Allah's edict is coming! So do not seek to hasten it. Immaculate is He and exalted above having any partners that they ascribe to Him. He sends down the angels with the Spirit* (16:1–2), and this is explicit in that the angels are other than the Spirit.

Author's comment: This narration corroborates the narrations we have previously mentioned, and there are a series of narrations that state that the Spirit is a creation even greater than Gabriel.

(8) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, under the verse *He created man from a drop of seminal fluid, and, behold, he is an open contender!* (16:4), it is reported that the Imām said: 'God created man from a worthless drop of fluid, and it is this same worthless drop that became a a vocal disputant with Him!'

(9) Also, in the same source, under the verse *when you bring them home for rest and when you drive them forth to pasture* (16:6), the Imām has said: 'This refers to the time of returning from the pasture and the time of setting out to the pasture.'

(10) In *Tafsīr al-'Ayyāshī*, from Zurāra, from one of the two Imāms, al-Bāqir or al-Ṣādiq, it is narrated that he said: 'I asked him about the urine of horses, donkeys, and mules, and he said: "We consider it disliked." I asked, "Isn't their flesh permissible?" He replied: "Has not God Almighty made it clear to you: *He created the cattle, in which there is warmth for you and other uses and some of them you eat* (16:5). This means that the meat of cattle, namely camels, cows, and sheep, is permissible, but concerning beasts of burden,

namely horses, mules, and donkeys, it has only been stated: *And horses, mules and asses, for you to ride them, and for adornment*. From the former, the consumption of meat is mentioned, but from the latter, only the matter of riding is mentioned.

Author's comment: There are differing narrations about the permissibility of horses, mules, and donkeys for eating, and the school of the Prophet's Household is that eating their meat is permissible but disliked.

(11) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, about the verse *, and He creates what you do not know* (16:8), it is mentioned that the Imām said: 'This refers the wonders which God creates in the seas and the land of the world.'

(12) And in *al-Durr al-manthūr*, it is reported that under the verse *With Allah rests guidance to the straight path, and some of them are devious* (wa min-hā jā'ir) 'Abd b. Ḥumayd, Ibn Mundhir, and Ibn al-Anbārī (in the *Kitāb al-Maṣāḥif*) have transmitted from 'Alī that he recited the verse in the form *fa-min-kum jā'ir* ('some of you are devious').

(13) In *Tafsīr al-'Ayyāshī*, as narrated from Ismā'īl b. Abī Ziyad from Ja'far b. Muḥammad, from his father, from his forefathers, from 'Alī, it is recounted that the Prophet said regarding the explanation of the verse *, and by the stars they are guided* (16:16): 'The star referred to here is the North Star, because it is the only star which does not circle around the pole and does not change its position, and by which the people of the land and sea find their way.'

Author's comment: This narration has also been reported from Imām al-Ṣādiq.

(14) In *al-Kāfī*, al-Kulaynī narrates via a chain of narration from Dāwūd al-Jaṣṣāṣ: 'I heard Imām al-Ṣādiq say that the star mentioned in the verse, *and by the stars they are guided*, refers to the Prophet Muḥammad, and the *landmarks* refer to the Imāms of guidance.'

Author's comment: *al-Kāfī* has also reported this narration through two other chains from the Imām al-Ṣādiq and from Imām al-Riḍā, and both al-'Ayyāshī and al-Qummī have included it in their commentaries. Shaykh al-Ṭūsī has narrated it in his *Amālī* from Imām al-Ṣādiq, and this is not from the category of commentary (*tafsīr*), but from the category of esoteric interpretation (*bāṭin*), as indicated by the fact that al-Ṭabrisī

has transmitted it in *Majmaʿ al-bayān* where Imām al-Ṣādiq said: 'We are the signs, and the Messenger of God is the star. He then stated: The Messenger of God said: "God has placed the stars as a source of security for the inhabitants of the heavens and the People of my Household as a source of security for the inhabitants of the earth.'

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Verses 22–40

This section contains the second part of the chapter's opening verses. The first part encompassed a declaration of the oneness of God's lordship and established the argument against the polytheists in this regard, warning them of impending divine punishment and exalting the sanctity of God beyond their association of partners with Him.

The second part follows on from this by calling attention to the negative traits and moral failings of the polytheists, all of which are shown to stem from their denial of monotheism: This includes their fallacious arguments, their arrogance before God, their mockery of His signs, and their denial of the Resurrection. It them proceeds to deliver a refutation of these beliefs and a threat of worldly punishment, warning them of the torment on the day that they die and the day they are resurrected. It expounds other realities still, which we will make clear in the discussion below.

إِلَٰهُكُمْ إِلَٰهٌ وَاحِدٌ فَالَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ قُلُوبُهُم مُّنكِرَةٌ وَهُم مُّسْتَكْبِرُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

(16:22) Your God is One God. Those who do not believe in the Hereafter, their hearts are amiss, and they are arrogant.

As we have already discussed previously, this verse follows as a logical consequence of the arguments laid out in the verses of the preceding section.

The phrase, *Those who do not believe in the Hereafter…* follows on from that same statement and initiates a new topic of discussion regarding the conduct and speech of the disbelievers and the behaviors of theirs that arise from their disbelief in God. Although the text does not explicitly mention disbelief in God but rather disbelief in the Day of Judgment, this is because the aforementioned argument was a testament to complete monotheism, which entails the obligation to believe in an all-knowing, omnipotent deity who created all beings and bestowed blessings upon them not in vain or in falsehood, but in truth, so that they may eventually return to Him

to be judged and rewarded or punished according to the commands and prohibitions communicated by His messengers.

Therefore, the monotheism demonstrated by the arguments of the previous verses refers to belief in the oneness of God Almighty, belief in what His messengers have brought, and belief in the Day of Reckoning. Hence, in these very verses, a disbeliever is defined as one who does not believe in the Day of Judgment, because belief in this day implies belief in the oneness of God and in the missions of His messengers.

For a more detailed understanding of what we have discussed here, readers can refer to our commentary on the initial verses of the chapter that states: *He sends down the angels with the Spirit of His command to whomever He wishes of His servants: 'Warn the people that there is no god except Me; so be wary of Me.' He created the heavens and the earth in truth. He is above having any partners that they ascribe to Him.* Therefore, this verse covers the three fundamental doctrinal beliefs.

... *their hearts are amiss* (munkira) means that their hearts deny the truth.

... *and they are arrogant* (mustakbirūn) indicates that they display disdain toward the truth. Arrogance (*istikbār*)—as has been said—refers to when someone refuses to accept the truth to appear powerful, considering themselves too important to submit to it.

The meaning of the verse is that your deity is One, and clear signs point to this. When the matter is of such clarity, nothing can conceal it and it leaves no room for doubt. Hence, those who do not believe in the day of judgment have hearts that deny the truth, showing animosity and obstinacy toward it, trying through their stubbornness to present themselves as greater than the truth without any evidence or argument to justify their rebellion against it.

لَا جَرَمَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّونَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْتَكْبِرِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾

(16:23) Undoubtedly (*lā jarama*), Allah knows whatever they hide and whatever they disclose. Indeed He does not like the arrogant.

The phrase *lā jaram* is a composite expression used in the same sense in all situations. As mentioned by lexicographers such as Khalīl and Sībawayh,

it conveys the meaning of being certain about something. Definitions provided by other scholars essentially align with that of Khalīl and Sībawayh, despite some disagreement over its composite nature. Khalīl has asserted that this word is used for emphasizing certainty and is only used in response to a statement. For example, in response to someone saying, 'They have done such and such,' one would reply, 'Undoubtedly (*lā jarama*), they will regret it.'

The essence of the verse is that God Almighty is fully aware of what individuals conceal and what they reveal to others. This expression carries an implicit warning of stern retribution, signifying that God is cognizant of all their actions, whether done in secrecy or openly. He will inevitably bring them to account and administer punishment for their disbelief and haughtiness. This is because God holds no affection for those who are arrogant.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُم مَّاذَا أَنزَلَ رَبُّكُمْ قَالُوٓاْ أَسَاطِيرُ الأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾

(16:24) When they are told, 'What is it that your Lord has sent down?' They say, 'Myths of the ancients (*asāṭīr al-awwalīn*),'

Asāṭīr is the plural of *saṭr* or *saṭar*, which Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī says in his *Mufradāt* refers to lines of writing on a page, lines of people planted in rows, or lines of people standing in ranks. Its plural can be *suṭur*, *asaṭir*, *suṭūr*, or *asāṭīr*.

As for the phrase *asāṭīr al-awwalīn*, al-Mubarrad says that *asāṭīr* here is the plural of *usṭūra* ('myth') in the same way that the word *arājīḥ* is the plural of *arjūḥa* ('swing'), *athāfī* is the plural of *athfiya* ('tripod'), and *aḥadīth* s the plural of *aḥdūtha* ('speech;).

Therefore, the term *asāṭīr al-awwalīn* refers to writings full of legends and superstitions that their adherents mistakenly held sacred, as God Almighty indicated when He quoted the disbelievers referring to the Qur'an as: '*myths of the ancients, and they are dictated to him morning and evening*' (25:5). This is al-Mubarrad's explanation, while others have suggested that *asāṭīr* is the plural of *asṭār*, which as we mentioned, is also the plural of *saṭr*, meaning 'line', and making the word *asāṭīr* a plural of plurals.

In the phrase, *When they are told, 'What is it that your Lord has sent*

down?', it is possible that the inquirer was one of the believers, who posed this question to the disbelievers to test them and discover their views on the mission of the Prophet. It is also conceivable that the speaker was one of the idol worshipers who asked this question of others in mockery of the believers. Alternatively, it might have been a confused individual genuinely questioning the authenticity of the Prophetic mission. The subsequent verse, as well as the verse, *But to those who were Godwary it will be said, 'What is it that your Lord has sent down?'*, seem to support one of the latter two readings.

They say, 'Myths of the ancients,'—this refers to the matter about which they are questioned, meaning it consists of falsehoods and superstitions written down and recorded by the forebears, left for future generations, and this answer implies that the Qur'an has not been revealed by God almighty, but is rather the work of human hands.

لِيَحْمِلُوٓاْ أَوْزَارَهُمْ كَامِلَةً يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَمِنْ أَوْزَارِ الَّذِينَ يُضِلُّونَهُم بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ أَلَا سَاءَ مَا يَزِرُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

(16:25) that they may bear their entire burdens (*awzār*) on the Day of Resurrection, along with some of the burdens of those whom they lead astray without any knowledge. Look! Evil is what they bear!

In his *Mufradāt*, al-Rāghib explains: 'The word *wazr* means a refuge or shelter, such as a mountain, to which people can flee for safety during dangerous times, just as God has said elsewhere: *No indeed! There is no refuge* (wazr)*! That day the abode will be toward your Lord.* Conversely, the word *wizr*, of which *awzār* is a plural, means a heavy burden. This is because it compares a burden to the weight of a mountain. Hence why sins are called *awzār*, just as they are called *athqāl* ('loads'). For example, see the verse, *that they may bear their entire burdens* (awzār) *on the Day of Resurrection* (16:25), and *But surely they will carry their own loads and other loads along with their own loads* (29:13).'

He continues: 'Bearing the burdens of others is, in reality, akin to what the Prophet Muḥammad explained in the tradition: "Whoever establishes a good practice in Islam, earns the reward of it and the reward of anyone who acts upon it thereafter, without their reward being diminished in any

way. And whoever establishes a bad practice in Islam, bears its burden and the burden of anyone who acts upon it." The meaning of the tradition is: "whoever initiates a good practice and accustoms people to it, shall earn the reward for that act and also the like of the reward of everyone who performs it thereafter, without diminishing the reward of those who act upon it; and whoever initiates a bad practice, shall bear the burden of that act as well as the like of the burden of everyone who acts upon it."'

In the tradition, the word 'like' is understood implicitly from the context, meaning that they shall receive a reward or punishment equivalent to that received by subsequent doers of the same deed, without diminishing either. This resolves the apparent contradiction between verses such as *that they may bear their entire burdens ... along with some of the burdens of those whom they lead astray*, with verses such as: *No bearer of burdens shall bear the burden of another* (35:18). This is because the latter first verse speaks of bearing the burden in such a way that the original bearer is absolved of it, with another completely shouldering that load.

The tradition cited from the Prophet is transmitted through both Shi'i and Sunni chains of narration and is also confirmed by the Qur'an itself. For example, it states: *The faithful and their descendants who followed them in faith—We will make their descendants join them, and We will not stint anything from (the reward of) their deeds. Every man is a hostage to what he has earned* (52:21). It also states: *Indeed it is We who revive the dead and write what they have sent ahead and their effects which they left behind* (36:12), and there are many verses that convey this meaning.

As for the explanation of the Prophet's statement, 'shall bear its burden and the burden of anyone who acts upon it' the consideration of the word 'like' as understood implicitly is not a bad point in terms of its literal and apparent meaning, and it serves to resolve any apparent contradictions between these narrations and verses such as *No bearer shall bear another's burden* (35:18), and others like *Your Lord will indeed recompense everyone fully for their works* (11:111). If we say the initiator of a bad precedent bears the entire burden of those who act upon it, and the actors themselves are not responsible, we contradict the first verse. If we say the initiator and the actors share the burden, we contradict the second verse. However, if we say the initiator and the one who gives the command bears a burden 'like' that of the actor, we have not contradicted either of these verses cited here.

This is the interpretation based on the literal and apparent meanings of the verses. But in terms of reality, we must say that just as an action, whether good or bad, is one action and does not duplicate, so too should the burden and punishment be one and not multiple. However, what happens is that sometimes the action itself, since it is based on more than one person—the relationship between the encouragement to perform the action by the one who bids someone to do a deed and the doer of the deed is actually horizontal and not vertical, which could cause confusion—inevitably, the burden and punishment will also rest on more than one person. Thus, in reality, in the issue of performing an ugly act, there is no more than one burden and more than one punishment. What happens is that with this one punishment, two people are punished: one the doer of the deed and one who told them to do it.

To further clarify the meaning of this concept, one needs only to pay close attention to the verses that deal with the personification of deeds. In doing so, we observe that an act, let's say an ugly one, when personified, takes on a singular personal form, yet it torments more than one person and manifests for more than one person—both the one who bid someone else to perform an act and caused them to do it, as well as the doer and agent of the act. Thus, the matter could be analogously understood as something that is imagined by two people who both suffer or enjoy because of their perception of it.

We previously discussed some aspects of this in our commentary one the verse *so that Allah may separate the bad ones from the good* and a detailed discussion of this will follow.

In any case, in the phrase ... *that they may bear* (li-yaḥmilū) *their entire burdens on the Day of Resurrection*, the preposition *lām* is to indicate purpose, and it is connected to the prior phrase, *They say, 'Myths of the ancients.'*

The clause, *whom they lead astray*, indicates that the bearing of others' burdens was because they misguided them, and the consequence of misguiding them is that they bear a share of their burdens. The implied meaning of the statement is: They said, "these are myths of the ancients", in order to mislead them, and they themselves were misguided, bearing not only the burdens of their own sins but also those whom they misguided without knowledge.

The reason why (the clause,) *that they may bear their entire burdens*, is specified with the clause 'entire' is in order to prevent the mistaken assumption that they carry only some of their own sins and some of the sins of those they have misled, rather than all of their own burdens and all of those of the misled.

In the phrase *along with some of* (min) *the burdens of those whom they lead astray* —the word *min* (some of) is to signify partition, because those who mislead others do not carry all the burdens of those they have misled; rather, they only carry those burdens that are the result of their misguidance. The context itself attests to this reading. Hence, the use of the preposition *min* is to distinguish between the sins and burdens result from misguidance and those that do not, not to imply that some of the burdens resulting from misguidance are attributed to the misleaders and some to the misled, or to suggest a division of the entire burden of misguidance among various parties. As this would conflict with verses like '*and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it* (99:8), which emphasize an individual's accountability for their own actions, so reflect on this.

From the foregoing discussion, it has become clear that the explanation some commentators have offered for the phrase *that they may bear their entire burdens on the Day of Resurrection* is not accurate or acceptable: They argue that this means none of their sins can be diminished and that such sins are not susceptible to expiation through suffering the tribulations of worldly life or through accepted acts of obedience that serve as atonement for the believers' sins.

Likewise, the reading advanced by some other scholars, that the verse in question implies that God Almighty annuls some punishments for the believers and considers mitigation for them, is also not correct. If there was no distinction between believers and non-believers, there would be no reason to specify that the disbelievers alone are those whose sins are not amenable to mitigation.

The reason these two readings are not acceptable is that although the disgrace of disbelievers and the dignity of believers are indeed preserved in their respective places, as indicated by the verses pointing to the humiliation of disbelievers through worldly punishments and the nullification of their deeds, and similarly, verses indicating divine intercession on behalf some believers, the verse under discussion does not consider this aspect. The

verse's sole focus is on the distinction between the burdens borne by those led astray by disbelievers and the burdens resulting from the disbelievers' own involvement in misguidance. It intends to convey that those who have been led astray by disbelievers will carry the weight of their own actions, while the those who led them astray will bear only those burdens which are a consequence of their own misleading actions. The weakest among the previously mentioned explanations is the one suggested by some, stating that the preposition *min* in *along with some of* (min) *the burdens of those whom they lead astray* is superfluous or explanatory. The baselessness of this claim will be obvious to the discerning reader.

Note also that the phrase, ...*whom they led astray* is qualified by the phrase ... *without any knowledge* (bi ghayr 'ilm). This is to indicate that those who were misled by the polytheists and deceived by their claim that the prophets' messages were nothing more than '*myths of the ancients*,' were misled without any evidence and followed them without proof. Hence, those who uttered this claim were leaders of misguidance, and the misled were their imitators and followers. In censure and condemnation of both groups, God states: *Look! Evil is what they bear!*

قَدْ مَكَرَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ فَأَتَى اللَّهُ بُنْيَانَهُم مِّنَ الْقَوَاعِدِ فَخَرَّ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّقْفُ مِن فَوْقِهِمْ وَأَتَاهُمُ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لاَ يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾

(16:26) Those who were before them had also schemed. Then Allah razed their edifice from the foundations and the roof collapsed upon them from above and the punishment overtook them whence they were not aware.

When God says that He *razed their edifice from their foundations*, this means that God's edict, which had not yet come forth, was issued. This expression is common in Arabic parlance, and the phrase, *the roof collapsed upon them* meant that it fell down in utter ruin.

As the context suggests, the phrase *Then Allah razed their edifice from the foundations and the roof collapsed upon them from above* appears to be a metaphor for nullifying their plots and exposing their deceptions in a way they did not anticipate. It is like one who fears an attack from the front and is fully alert in that direction, but suddenly the enemy strikes them from behind. Likewise, God demolishes the foundation of their scheming,

while they are focused on protecting the upper part—the roof—only to find that the roof has collapsed upon them. However, it is not that they have dismantled the roof, but rather the foundation has been removed from beneath it.

Therefore, the sentence, *and the punishment overtook them whence they were not aware*, serves as an explanatory addition to *Then Allah razed their edifice*, with the mentioned punishment being of a worldly nature.

This verse warns the idol worshipers, who were scheming against God and His Messenger, by reminding them of how God dealt with previous schemers and what befell rebellious nations in the past—how He turned their own schemes against them.

ثُمَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يُخْزِيهِمْ وَيَقُولُ أَيْنَ شُرَكَائِيَ الَّذِينَ كُنتُمْ تُشَاقُّونَ فِيهِمْ قَالَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ إِنَّ الْخِزْيَ الْيَوْمَ وَالسُّوءَ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾

(16:27) Then He will disgrace them (*yukhzī-him*) on the Day of Resurrection, and say, 'Where are My partners for whose sake you used to differ (*tushāqqūn fī-him*)?' Those who were given knowledge will say, 'Indeed today disgrace and distress pursue the faithless.'

The phrase *yukhzī-him* ('He will disgrace them') comes from *khizy*, which, according to al-Rāghib, refers to a disgrace that causes its bearer to feel ashamed. The term *tushāqqūn* comes from '*shaqq*,' which literally means to cut or separate a part of something, and figuratively, it refers to disputing with and showing hostility toward someone with whom there should be no dispute, instead there should be friendship and agreement. Hence, the polytheists' dissent regarding their so-called partners means their disagreement with the people of monotheism, even though they are a single community created by God upon the nature of monotheism and the true religion. These dissenters argue with the believers and separate themselves from them. The verse means that God Almighty will soon subject them to a shameful punishment on the Day of Judgment and will ask them: 'Where are those partners of Mine over whom you used to disagree with the people of the truth, causing division in the natural religion?'

Those who were given knowledge will say, 'Indeed today disgrace and distress pursue the faithless'—The context of this phrase indicates that by

disgrace (*khizy*), it means the humiliation of their position combined with the severity of their punishment. Those whom God has described as being endowed with knowledge, and whom He informs us will declare such things on the Day of Judgment, are indeed the ones who have acquired knowledge of the oneness of God and to whom the reality of monotheism has been unveiled. This knowledge is consistent with the context of the verse since it confronts the error of the polytheists. The error of the polytheists is what will become apparent to them on the Day of Judgment, as it will be revealed that what they worshiped in the world were merely empty names they had assigned to non-existent things and mirages they had mistaken for water.

Other Qur'anic verses also corroborate this interpretation. For the verse under discussion says: *On the Day of Resurrection ... Those who were given knowledge will say ...* Elsewhere, describing that same Day, it states: *None shall speak except whom the All-beneficent permits and who says what is right* (78:38). From this, it is understood that only the one who is protected from error, vain talk, and falsehood can speak rightly. One is safeguarded from speaking falsehood only if he is also preserved from acting upon falsehood in his deeds. Thus, they must be individuals who see nothing but the truth, engage in nothing but the truth, and speak nothing but the truth.

If you argue: that understanding the phrase *Those who were given knowledge* refers as referring solely to the Infallibles is confounded by other instances, where this expression in the Qur'an is also used for those who are not infallible. For example, consider the following verses: *Those who were given knowledge said, 'Woe to you! Allah's reward is better ...'* (28:80); *That those who have been given knowledge may know that it is the truth from your Lord, and so they may have faith in it ...* (22:54).

And there are other instances besides these in which the expression clearly pertains to those who are not infallible.

Our response to this is as follows: What we have said with regards to the present verse is an understanding that has been derived with the help of context, not that the term 'those who have been given knowledge' exclusively denotes the infallible, necessitating that wherever this expression appears in the Qur'an, it must convey that meaning.

As for the assertion that the term *Those who were given knowledge* refers only to the prophets, or to prophets and certain believers who became

knowledgeable about the signs of monotheism in this world, or that it refers solely to the believers or to the angels, these are statements for which the verse provides no evidence whatsoever.

الَّذِينَ تَتَوَفَّاهُمُ الْمَلائِكَةُ ظَالِمِي أَنفُسِهِمْ فَأَلْقَوُاْ السَّلَمَ مَا كُنَّا نَعْمَلُ مِن سُوءٍ بَلَى إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

(16:28) Those whom the angels take away while they are wronging themselves. Thereat they offer submission (*fa alqaw al-salam*): 'We were not doing any evil!' 'Yes, indeed Allah knows best what you used to do!

It appears that the sentence '*Those whom the angels take away while they are wronging themselves ...*' is an exposition of the term 'faithless' (*kāfirīn*) at the end of the previous verse. Conversely, the forthcoming statement, *those whom the angels take away while they are pure* (16:32) explains the term '*the Godwary*' (*muttaqīn*) that appears at the end of the verse immediately in front of it. And just because we are saying that this verse explains the term '*disbelievers*', it does not follow that it is part of the statement '*those who have been given knowledge*', such that one might argue that it disrupts the flow of the passage. This is because it would be required that those referred to in '*those who have been given knowledge*' should have first stated that disgrace and misfortune are upon the disbelievers today, and then, instead of speaking about the disbelievers with the phrase '*Those whom the angels take*', they would have used a different term.

The word *salam* in the phrase *fa alqaw al-salam* ('they offer submission') means surrender, humility, and obedience; the pronoun 'they' refers back to the disbelievers. The verse's meaning is that the disbelievers are those whom the angels take their souls at a time when they are engrossed in their own oppression and disbelief. Suddenly, they submit and show humility, pretending as if they have not committed any vile acts. Yet, at the moment of death, their claims are rejected and refuted, and it is declared to them: 'On the contrary! You did do such and such, but God was aware of what you were doing before you fell into this pit, that is, death.'

فَادْخُلُواْ أَبْوَابَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا فَلَبِئْسَ مَثْوَى الْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

(16:29) Enter the gates of hell to remain in it forever. Evil is the

final abode of the arrogant (*mutakabbirīn*).'

In this verse, like the previous verse '*Indeed today disgrace and distress pursue the faithless.*' (16:27), and in the verse *those whom the angels take away* (16:28), the speech is directed to all the disbelievers collectively, not to each individually. Therefore, the meaning of the verse under discussion devolves to the following: 'Each of you will enter through a gate of Hell that befits your sins', not that each of you will enter through all the gates of Hell or from several of them; as to say this would not convey the correct meaning for the verse. We have already discussed the meaning of Hell having multiple gates in the exegesis of the verse *It has seven gates, and to each gate belongs a separate portion of them* (15:44).

The term *mutakabbirīn* ('arrogant') is more or less identical in meaning with *mustakbirīn*, even if their literal forms are somewhat distinct and each are used in subtly different contexts, in the same manner as *muslim* and *mustaslim* (both mean 'one who surrenders'): Hence, the *mustakbir* is one who seeks to aggrandize himself and desires to bring this out of a potential state and into a real one to display it to others, while the *mutakabbir* is one who has adopted arrogance as a trait and made it a part of their personality.

وَقِيلَ لِلَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا مَاذَا أَنزَلَ رَبُّكُمْ قَالُوا خَيْرًا لِّلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا فِي هَٰذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةٌ وَلَدَارُ الْآخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ وَلَنِعْمَ دَارُ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٣٠﴾

(16:30) But to those who were Godwary (*alladhīna ittaqū*) it will be said, 'What is it that your Lord has sent down?' They will say, 'Good.' For those who do good in this world there will be a good reward, and the abode of the Hereafter is better, and the abode of the Godwary is surely excellent:

In this verse, the people who were characterized by piety and Godwariness in the life of this world are questioned. The reason why God uses the verbal construction *alladhīna ittaqū* ('those who were Godwary') here is that they possessed this attribute continuously. By contrast, both at the end of this verse and in the next verse, God refers to them with the active participle *muttaqīn* ('the Godwary'), which suggests a broader application of the term than *alladhīna ittaqū*. Therefore, it can be said those who will

be questioned among the pious in this verse are those who are the best in piety and faith, just as those who were questioned among the other group in the previous verse were the most wicked and complete in disbelief.

Thus, the claim by some commentators that the term refers to all believers who have avoided idolatry or, at most, have abstained from certain sins is not correct.

The response from those who are questioned about what they Lord has sent down is 'good' (*khayr*), meaning: 'He has sent down goodness.' This is because He has sent down the Qur'an, which contains the knowledge and laws necessary to attain happiness in this world and the hereafter. In saying 'good', they acknowledge two things: one, that the Qur'an is indeed a message sent down by God, and two, that it contains in its verses the keys to the happiness of humanity in both this world and the next. And in this acknowledgment, they also respond to their opponents (the arrogant ones), who had dismissed it as mere legends. And if the word '*good*' had been made to follow the word '*sent down*' it would not have conveyed these points, meaning it would not have constituted an acknowledgment of divine revelation.

Therefore, just as if the unbelievers answered the very same question by saying: '*myths of the ancients*' (16:24), the believers answer it by saying that God has sent down goodness to humankind. Note, however, that even the response of the disbelievers hints at an acknowledgment that this is something that has been sent down by God—at least according to some commentators.

From the apparent context of this passage, it emerges that the phrase, *For those who do good in this world there will be a good reward, and the abode of the Hereafter is better, and the abode of the Godwary is surely excellent*, is an explanation of the response of the Godwary in the previous verse when they said that their Lord had sent down goodness.

Now, the question is whether this explanation comes from the respondents themselves and therefore represents a continuation of their answer, or is it an utterance from God Almighty? It seems that when He says: '*and the abode of the Godwary is surely excellent: the Gardens of Eden ...* (16:30–31) this is meant as the direct speech of God Almighty. It is as if He wishes to elaborate on the answer of the righteous and explain the value of the Qur'an and the message it contains. This is because, in its style of

expression, the aforementioned statement is closer to the tone of the Lord of mankind than that of His servants, especially those servants whom God has praised for their piety, for the pious do not dare to assign to themselves the destiny of dwelling the gardens of eternity.

The phrase '*a good reward*' refers to a dignified recompense. Indeed, the Godwary, due to the good they do in compliance with the Qur'an's commandments, form a righteous community that is governed by justice and benevolence, a life that is established on human flourishing and happiness. As a result, they also enjoy a good life in this world, as indicated by the phrase '*in this world*,' and it is evident that the life of the hereafter is even better for such people, for its joy is everlasting, and its blessings are not mixed with affliction, nor is its contentment followed by disappointment.

Therefore, the full meaning of the verse is that the faithful were asked: 'What has your Lord revealed? And how was what He revealed?' They answered: 'He has sent down goodness, for there is a good reward for those who do good—meaning those who follow the instructions of the divine scripture, and this expression indicates that the said book commands goodness and benevolence toward others—in this world, and a better reward in the hereafter.'

Then, at the end, God praises them to affirm the statement, saying: '*And how excellent is the abode of the Godwary*.' Then, He elaborates once again, indicating that their home is:

جَنَّاتُ عَدْنٍ يَدْخُلُونَهَا تَجْرِى مِن تَحْتِهَا الأَنْهَارُ لَهُمْ فِيهَا مَا يَشَاؤُونَ كَذَلِكَ يَجْزِى اللَّهُ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٣١﴾ الَّذِينَ تَتَوَفَّاهُمُ الْمَلائِكَةُ طَيِّبِينَ يَقُولُونَ سَلامٌ عَلَيْكُمُ ادْخُلُواْ الْجَنَّةَ بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾

(16:31–32) The Gardens of Eden, which they will enter, with streams running in them. There they will have whatever they wish, and thus does Allah reward the Godwary—those whom the angels take away while they are pure. They say to them, 'Peace be to you! Enter paradise because of what you used to do.'

The above verse describes the state of the Godwary at the moment of their death, revealing the kind of individuals they are, in the same way that another verse, —*Those whom the angels take away while they are wronging*

themselves (16:28), elucidates the state of the arrogant. The term 'pure' (*ṭayyib*) signifies the absence of any contamination that might sully or pollute something, diminishing its purity. One might say *ṭāba lī al-ʿaysh* ('life has become pure for me', where the word *ṭāba* is a cognate of *ṭayyib*), meaning that it has been cleansed of everything that could cause trouble or cause it to become distasteful. A *qawlun ṭayyibun* ('pure speech') is one that is free from frivolity, ridicule, harshness, and other such impurities.

The difference between *ṭayyib* and *ṭāhir* (both of which can mean 'pure') is that *ṭāhir* denotes being in a state of original purity, devoid of anything that could be a source of revulsion or disgust toward it. By contrast, *ṭayyib* means being in a pure and original state, free from any element that could sully or spoil it, regardless of whether this induces an aversion to it or not. Consequently, *ṭayyib* is often contrasted with *khabīth* ('foul', 'vicious'), which describes a thing that comprises undesirable elements beyond its original essence. In the Qur'an, it is stated: *Vicious women are for vicious men, and vicious men for vicious women. Good women are for good men, and good men for good women* (24:26), and also: *The good land* (al-balad al-ṭayyib)*—its vegetation comes out by the permission of its Lord, and as for that which is bad* (alladhī khabutha)*, it does not come out except sparsely* (7:58).

Thus, the purity of the Godwary at the time of their death refers to their being free from the impurity of wrongdoing, contrasting with the arrogant who are described as being in a state of wronging themselves at the time of death, as stated: *Those whom the angels take away while they are wronging themselves* (16:28).

The meaning of the verse thus becomes: 'The Godwary are those whom the angels take their souls at death while they are free from the impurities of wrongdoing —such as idolatry and other sins —and to them they say 'peace be to you!' —a statement reassuring them of their safety —'enter Paradise because of what you used to do,' guiding them thereby to Paradise.

As you can see, this verse describes the Godwary as being pure and free from the contamination of wrongdoing, promising them security and guidance toward Paradise. Therefore, the meaning devolves to that of the verse which says: *Those who have faith and do not taint their faith with wrongdoing—for such there shall be safety, and they are the guided* (6:82).

Some commentators have said that *ṭayyib* in the present verse means purity from the filth of idolatry. Others have explained it as referring to purity in speech and action. However, the majority of commentators are inclined to read it as denoting purification from the defilement of sins in general. And you, dear reader, upon careful consideration of what we have mentioned above, will understand that none of these interpretations is without its deficiencies.

Various commentators have suggested different meanings for the term '*ṭayyib*' in this verse. Some believe it signifies being free from the impurities of idol worship, while others interpret it as representing cleanliness in one's words and deeds. However, the predominant view among commentators is that it implies a broader purification from all forms of sin. Yet, as you, the discerning reader, might gather from our previous discussions, each of these interpretations carries its own deficiencies.

هَلْ يَنظُرُونَ إِلاَّ أَن تَأْتِيَهُمُ الْمَلاَئِكَةُ أَوْ يَأْتِيَ أَمْرُ رَبِّكَ كَذَلِكَ فَعَلَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ وَمَا ظَلَمَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَلَـكِن كَانُواْ أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾

(16:33) Do they await anything but that the angels should come to them, or your Lord's edict should come? Those who were before them had acted likewise; Allah did not wrong them, but they used to wrong themselves.

Here the discourse reverts to the narrative of the arrogant idolaters, recounting some of their words and deeds and comparing their situation with the transgressors from past nations.

Do they await anything but that the angels should come to them, or your Lord's edict should come? —The tone of the verse, especially the story of the torment mentioned in the following verse, is evidently that of a threat. Hence, the meaning of the angels' coming is their descent to deliver a devastating and ruinous punishment to the disbelievers. In summary, it is in the position of explaining a matter similar to what verses like *We do not send down the angels except with due reason, and then they will not be granted any respite* (15:8) are explaining. And the intended meaning of the coming of your Lord's edict is the setting in of the Day of Resurrection and the divine judgment and retribution upon them.

The passage suggests that the coming God's edict, as mentioned at

the beginning of the chapter with the phrase *Allah's edict is coming*, could possibly refer to the coming of divine aid and the triumph of Islam over idolatry. However, this reading is rather weak given the severe tone of the verse under discussion, which does not align with such an interpretation. Furthermore, the subsequent discussion in the present series of verses suggests a debate about the idolaters' denial of the Resurrection and responses to it, which reinforces the suggestion that *Allah's edict* refers to the setting in of the Day of Judgment.

Moreover, the term 'Lord' is specifically attached to the Prophet (as it appears as '*your Lord*' in the verse rather than 'God's edict'), indicating that the coming of God's edict will be a victory for the Prophet and a triumph for him over his enemies.

The phrase *Those who were before them had acted likewise*, emphasizes the threat and invokes a historical parallel, indicating that those people who came before them also denied God's signs and mocked the truth, and engaged in actions that naturally invited divine punishment, which they ultimately faced: *So the evils of what they had earned visited them* ... (16:34).

The subsequent sentence, *Allah did not wrong them, but they used to wrong themselves,* is an interjection to clarify that the descent of punishment was due to their own wrongdoing, and not an act of injustice on behalf of God. It emphasizes that God did not send punishment for a single or double injustice of wrongdoing, but actually granted them respite until they persisted in their wrongdoing, after which punishment was sent down upon them. The phrase *used to wrong themselves*, suggests the persistence and permanence of their unjust behavior, thus establishing their determination in wrongdoing and negating any notion that an injustice had originated with God.

فَأَصَابَهُمْ سَيِّئَاتُ مَا عَمِلُواْ وَحَاقَ بِهِم مَّا كَانُواْ بِهِۦ يَسْتَهْزِؤُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

(16:34) So the evils of what they had earned visited them (*ḥāqa bihim*), and they were besieged by what they used to deride.

Lastly, *ḥāqa bihim* is understood to mean that God's punishment enveloped them. Some have also read it to mean that it descended upon them, referring to the very punishments that their prophets had warned them about, which they had mocked. The remainder of the verse's meaning

is clear.

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُواْ لَوْ شَاء اللَّهُ مَا عَبَدْنَا مِن دُونِهِ مِن شَيْءٍ نَّحْنُ وَلا آبَاؤُنَا وَلاَ حَرَّمْنَا مِن دُونِهِ مِن شَيْءٍ كَذَلِكَ فَعَلَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ فَهَلْ عَلَى الرُّسُلِ إِلاَّ الْبَلاغُ الْمُبِينُ ﴿٣٥﴾

(16:35) The polytheists say, 'Had Allah wished, we would not have worshiped anything besides Him—neither we, nor our fathers—nor would we have held anything holy besides Him.' Those who were before them had acted likewise. Is the messengers' duty anything but to communicate in clear terms?

This verse speaks on behalf of the idolaters who deny the principle of prophethood, expressing their skepticism toward it. This is why it describes them with their explicit characteristic: *The polytheists* (qālū allādīna ashrakū, lit. 'those who practiced polytheism said'). Note that the Qur'an could have sufficed by using a pronoun, such as 'they said', as in the preceding verses, it was content with pronouns. However, it did not do this, and the rationale for this is so that the listener will clearly understand that the doubt being expressed here is that of the idol worshipers.

The clause, *Had Allah wished, we would not have worshiped*, is a conditional sentence. The direct of object of the verb *wished* is omitted, since the consequent of the conditional sentence conveys it. The full meaning of the sentence is: 'If God had willed us not to worship anything besides Him, then we would not have worshiped anything besides him.'

Some critics maintain that divine will cannot be connected to inaction, such as not engaging in worship. It's argued that there must be a tangible, existent element that aligns with God's will and corresponds directly with the act of 'not worshiping.' In other words, if God intended for us to be monotheists or to solely worship Him, then our worship of others would not occur. This perspective hinges on the idea that 'What God wills happens, and what He does not will does not happen.' Here, the absence of an action is considered to result from the absence of a positive divine will, rather than the presence of a divine intent to prevent the action.

However, this critique doesn't hold up. While the underlying concept may be accurate in metaphysical terms, the nuances of language and the

metaphorical nature of speech don't strictly conform to cosmic truths or philosophical constructs. In fact, the prevalent mindset among the general populace, including the idol worshipers who lacked more sophisticated reasoning, acknowledges that the manifestation of existent entities is sanctioned by divine will. Similarly, the emergence of non-existent entities is also deemed permissible and feasible by divine will. The language used by the Messenger of God aligns with these linguistic norms. This is evident in his own words addressed to God Almighty: 'O God, if You wish that You should not be worshiped, then indeed, You will not be worshiped!'

Additionally, with their statement, '*Had Allah wished, we would not have worshiped ...*', the idol worshipers alluded to the words of their prophets, who admonished them not to ascribe partners to God and to worship none but Him, and to not declare forbidden what God had made lawful. All these words are prohibitive commands, and prohibition implies a demand for cessation. Hence, the divine will is indeed attached to the non-performance of an act.

Moreover, the idolaters were not denying the oneness of God in His lordship in terms of being the creator of the universe. They did not attribute the creation and origination of the world to two gods; rather, they only denied the exclusivity of His worship. In other words, they acknowledged creation and origination as the exclusive domain of God but devoted their worship to their own deities. Indeed, the polytheists had many gods; among them was one who was considered the creator of the universe but who was not worshiped, and the rest were worshiped but not regarded as creators. Therefore, the polytheists did not actually worship God; it was not a case of them worshiping both God and others. Given this, the implied meaning of the phrase '*Had Allah wished...*' could be: 'Had God willed that we affirm His oneness in worship, or had He willed that we worship Him alone, we would have done so.'

If this is the intended meaning of the phrase, then the critical outcome of this conditional statement should focus on confirming the exclusivity of His worship or the act of worshipping Him alone, rather than merely denying the worship of others. Consequently, if the result of the conditional statement is expressed as a denial of worshipping others, it should be understood as an indirect way of emphasizing the exclusivity of worshiping Him alone. Thus, this nuance is important to grasp.

If you reject this explanation and maintain that divine will should be linked to an actual, existent matter, then the phrase should be construed as: 'Had God decided that we should stop worshiping others, we would not have worshiped...' In this way, although the condition and its consequence appear different in terms of affirmation and negation, they are essentially aligned in their actual implication.

In the phrase, '... *we would not have worshiped anything besides Him* (mā ʿabadnā min dūni-hi min shayʾ)...', the first use of the preposition *min* ('of', 'from') is explanatory, while the second is superfluous, to emphasize the totality of the negation, giving the sentence the meaning: 'We would not have worshiped anything apart from Him.' The same is true in the case of the subsequent phrase '*nor would we have held anything holy besides Him*.'

The phrase, *neither we, nor our fathers*, serves to clarify the identity of the speaker of the statement, '... *we would not have worshiped ...*' indicating that this statement is made on behalf of both themselves and their forefathers, as they followed their forefathers in the worship of idols. The Qurʾan frequently recounts such statements from the polytheists, as in the verse: '*We found our fathers following a creed and we are indeed following in their footsteps*' (43:23).

The phrase, '... *nor would we have held anything holy besides Him*', is a continuation of the sentence starting with '... *worshiped ...*' meaning: 'If God had willed that we do not venerate or treat as sacred anything without His command or that we make lawful what we had forbidden, we would never have declared it forbidden ...' And what is meant by what they had forbidden are the *baḥīra*, *sāʾiba*, and other sacred things which are named elsewhere in the Qurʾan.

Here, there is a point to consider, namely that the apparent meaning of the sentence, *'Had Allah wished, we would not have worshiped anything besides Him ...*', implies that the absence of worship is contingent on the will of God Almighty. What they mean here by '*Had Allah wished*' is God's creative will, which never fails to fulfill His intent because if they had meant other than that, namely God's legislative will, they should have said: 'If God had so willed, we would certainly have obeyed Him and answered His call'—implying if God had willed thus in the form of a moral or legislative command, we would surely have obeyed Him and responded to His command. Therefore, this is an explanation of the idolaters' rationale for

their idolatry, claiming that if God's will had been genuinely set against idol worship, they would never have engaged in it in the first place.

Thus, they seem to suggest that if the message of the prophets was a message of truth, and this command to abstain from worshiping idols and from venerating things such as the *baḥīra*, *sā'iba*, *wasīla*, and so on, were prohibitions from the sublime God, then we would neither have worshiped those idols nor would we have declared forbidden what He has made lawful. For if He had willed otherwise, it would have been impossible for us to act contrary to His will, since it is impossible for anything to deviate from His will. Therefore, the fact that we worship others besides Him and declare things as forbidden is in itself proof that there is no command or prohibition from God in this matter, and that no message or law from Him has come regarding this.

This summary of the idolaters' argument is what we have deduced from the context of the verse: They argue that their practices, like idolatry and forbidding what God has made lawful, and the other acts they engage in that are criticized by the Prophet and in his message, are not restrained by divine prohibition. Their reasoning is that if God had indeed forbidden these practices, they wouldn't have been able to engage in them at all.

However, it's crucial to note that they are not suggesting that God actively desires them to worship idols, making such worship and prohibitions an unavoidable necessity, rendering them powerless to resist. If that were the case, and they were under such compulsion, the prophets' admonitions would lose their significance. This is because the word 'had' (*law*) indicates the impossibility of a consequence if a condition is not met, and the meaning of the conditional sentence '*Had Allah wished* (law shā' Allāh)*, we would not have worshiped anything besides Him*' is that God has not in fact willed it, and thus we worship idols and declare lawful things forbidden.

It's incorrect to infer that they mean, 'God desired us to worship idols, hence we do, as we are compelled by Him,' or 'He desired us not to uphold monotheism in worship, and we haven't, because He compelled us.' These interpretations are not aligned with the verse's content or the intrinsic meaning of the conditional phrase.

Moreover, if their argument intended to dismiss the validity of prophethood by citing divine predestination, their very statement inadvertently

admits their deviation and inadvertently affirms the truth of prophethood. They attempt to justify their actions by claiming they are forced into misguidance and idolatry by God's will, making them unable to embrace the Prophet's guidance. They imply that God's will has bound them to persist in misguidance, compelling them into idolatry and the forbidding of what He has made lawful, leaving them powerless to act against His will.

Indeed, the polytheists wish to claim guidance and persist in their delusions. As God Himself recounts after describing their worship of the angels, they say: *They say, 'Had the All-beneficent wished, we would not have worshiped them.' They do not have any knowledge of that, and they do nothing but surmise. Did We give them a Book before this, so that they are holding fast to it? Rather they say, 'We found our fathers following a creed, and we are indeed guided in their footsteps'* (43:20–22). Therefore, they clearly claim that they and their forefathers were guided.

The Qur'an frequently relays the perspective of the idolaters who regard idolatry not merely as a practice but as a revered tradition passed down through generations. They hold the belief that each successive generation is obligated to honor this ancestral heritage without deviation. Yet, how does this belief align with their implicit acknowledgment of their own misguidance and wretchedness?

Furthermore, their argument was not meant to suggest that their actions were independently created by them, disconnected from divine will, contrary to the doctrine of determinism. Had that been their intent, it would not be sensible to relate their actions to the will of God, as, in that case, the divine will would be rendered ineffective, and God Almighty could only prevent such actions by creating obstacles and impediments to tem. With the creation of obstacles, God could have prevented them from doing what He did not wish for them to do. In this context, the polytheists would have said: 'If God had willed, He would have prevented us from worshiping others and from prohibiting what we have declared forbidden.' However, the apparent meaning of the verse refutes this interpretation. Alternatively, they would have said: 'If the will of God had been involved, then the action would not truly be ours; but the action is indeed ours, and we are independent in it.'

Moreover, the idolaters' stance doesn't imply that their deeds were self-originated, entirely detached from the divine will, which would contradict

the concept of determinism. If that were their assertion, it would be illogical to attribute their actions to God's will, for in such a scenario, God's will would seem ineffectual. If divine will were deemed ineffective, it would suggest that God Almighty could only deter such actions by placing hindrances and barriers. In this framework, the polytheists might argue, 'If God had willed, He would have prevented us from worshiping others and from prohibiting what we have declared forbidden.' But the apparent meaning of the verse contradicts this notion. Alternatively, they might claim, 'If the will of God had been involved, then the action would not truly be ours; but the action is indeed ours, and we are independent in it.' (Yet, this line of reasoning does not align with the verse's evident message.)

Furthermore, if the meaning of the statement, *Had Allah wished, we would not have worshiped anything besides Him* ..., was that: 'If God had wanted to prevent us by creating obstacles', then the polytheists would have had a valid point. It would not make sense for Qur'an to refute this in Surah al-Zukhruf by stating, *They do not have any knowledge of that, and they do nothing but surmise* (43:20).

Therefore, based on what we have mentioned here, it is correct to say that the polytheists' aim in saying, *Had Allah wished, we would not have worshiped anything besides Him*, was to justify their idolatry on the grounds that the divine will has not been attached to the abandonment of idol worship. In summary, God did not will that they should abandon it. They did not intend to imply that the divine will was, in fact, attached to the act of idol worship, which would necessitate predestination, nor did they mean that it is impossible for the divine will to be attached to worship, or to affirm the doctrine of delegation (*tafwīḍ*), which would mean that God can only prevent the actions of His servants by creating obstacles to them.

In response to this, the Qur'an makes clear that the only duty of the prophets is to deliver a clear message, and God's will regarding human guidance is legislative and dependent on human choice—it is not something predetermined: *Those who were before them had acted likewise. Is the messengers' duty anything but to communicate in clear terms?*

This part of the verse addresses the Prophet of God and commands him to convey his message clearly and to disregard the fabrications and justifications the polytheists concoct for their beliefs, because their arguments are void and invalid, whereas his proofs and arguments are complete

and decisive. This brief statement hints at the weakness of the polytheists' reasoning.

Thus, when it is said, *Those who were before them had acted likewise*, it means that the path his contemporaries have taken is exactly the same path that the polytheists of the past took, worshiping other than God and forbidding things that God had not forbidden. When God's messengers came to them and forbade them from these actions, they would say, '*Had Allah wished, we would not have worshiped anything besides Him—neither we, nor our fathers—nor would we have held anything holy besides Him*.' Hence, the verse in question conveys exactly the same theme as the verse: *Like the precedent of Pharaoh's clan and those who were before them, who defied Allah's signs, so Allah seized them for their sins* (8:54).

Is the messengers' duty anything but to communicate in clear terms?— This means they must convey the divine message clearly and complete the argument against the people to whom they are sent, for the sole duty of God's messengers is to deliver a clear and manifest message, nothing more. It is not their role to compel people to accept their summons to worship God, nor to take upon themselves the creative will of God, which does not accept deviation, and invite people to worship Him with that will; nor is it to invite people with the act of God's creative command, which brings things into existence when He says, '*Be*,' and thus forcefully turning them from disbelief to faith, and from sin to obedience.

Since the messenger is a human being like other humans, and the mission with which he is sent is to warn and to give glad tidings, or in other words, a set of social laws revealed to him by God that take into account and respect the welfare of people in this world and the hereafter. Although the appearance of these laws is in the form of commands and prohibitions, in reality, they are warnings and glad tidings. As God Almighty Himself has said: *Say, I do not say to you that I possess the treasuries of Allah, nor do I know the Unseen, nor do I say to you that I am an angel* (6:50). This is what God has commanded His prophet to convey to the people, and He gave the same instructions to Noah and the prophets who came after him, as indicated in Surah Hud and elsewhere.

Also, addressing the Messenger of God, God told him: *Say, 'I am just a human being like you. It has been revealed to me that your God is the One God. So whoever expects to encounter his Lord—let him act righteously, and*

not associate anyone with the worship of his Lord' (18:110). All of these ideas are summarized in the verse under discussion in a brief statement: *Those who were before them had acted likewise. Is the messengers' duty anything but to communicate in clear terms?* Since, as previously noted, this argument was well known to be associated with the polytheists both in ancient and recent times, the response of the prophets was always that it is not the role of a messenger of God to force people to faith and obedience, but rather his sole duty is to clearly and plainly convey the message, and to warn and give glad tidings for them to make up their own minds. The argument of the polytheists cannot respond to this reasoning. So, you carry on with your work and do not desire for the guidance of those who have gone astray, and in the two next verses, this argument in summary is expounded in detail:

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَّسُولاً أَنِ اعْبُدُواْ اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُواْ الطَّاغُوتَ فَمِنْهُم مَّنْ هَدَى اللَّهُ وَمِنْهُم مَّنْ حَقَّتْ عَلَيْهِ الضَّلالَةُ فَسِيرُواْ فِي الأَرْضِ فَانظُرُواْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿٣٦﴾

(16:36) Certainly We raised an messenger in every nation to preach: 'Worship Allah, and keep away from the Rebels (*ṭāghūt*).' Then among them were some whom Allah guided, and among them were some who deserved to be in error. So travel over the land and then observe how was the fate of the deniers.

The term *ṭāghūt* is originally a verbal noun, like *ṭughyān*, that means to transgress beyond rightful limits without justification, and its infinitive is *taghwā*. Al-Rāghib writes: '*Ṭāghūt* refers to any transgressor or any entity worshiped other than God; it is used in both the singular and plural forms. God Almighty has used it in the singular, saying, *So one who disavows the Rebels* ... (2:256) and also stated ... *and keep away from the Rebels* ... (16:36), as well as in the plural, for example, He has said, *their patrons are the Rebels* (2:257).'

As for the statement, *Certainly We raised a messenger in every nation to preach* ..., it points to the fact that the act of sending messengers is not specific to any one nation but is a universal tradition that applies to all people and nations, in accordance with their needs. God is well aware of the needs of His servants, just as in the previous verse, He hinted at the

universality of sending messengers by stating, *Those who were before them had acted likewise*.

And the phrase, *'Worship Allah, and keep away from the Rebels'*, as the context indicates, defines the mission of these messengers, meaning that the true essence of sending a messenger is nothing other than to invite God's servants to worship Him and to avoid *Ṭāghūt*. Because a command or prohibition from one human to another, especially when the one commanding or prohibiting is a messenger, is nothing other than a invitation to act. It does not imply coercion or compulsion, and the messenger himself cannot make such a claim, as someone could refute such a claim by saying: 'If God wills, we will not worship anyone but Him, and if He does not will, then sending a messenger makes no sense.' We have mentioned this to clarify the baselessness of the claim made by some that the implicit understanding of the statement should be, 'so that the messenger may tell them to worship God and avoid Rebel,' to make clear that their reasoning is unfounded.

It is stated that when God says, *Then among them were some whom Allah guided, and among them were some who deserved to be in error*, it means that all nations, like the current one, are divided into two factions: one, those whom God has guided successfully to His worship and avoidance of false deities; and the other, those upon whom misguidance has been established due to their own choices, not as a direct infliction by God as a form of punishment. Therefore, this passage highlights that all nations have been divided into two groups: those who are guided and those who are astray. It emphasizes that divine guidance is a reward for good deeds, while going astray is a punishment for one's own misguidance.

This shows that guidance comes solely from God Almighty, and no one shares this role with Him. It is not attributed to anyone except as a derivative of His will, as He Himself has addressed His Prophet in the Qur'an, saying, " *You cannot guide whomever you wish, but (it is) Allah (who) guides whomever He wishes, and He knows best those who are guided* (28:56). Then, in the following verse of this chapter, we read: *If you are eager for them to be guided, indeed Allah does not guide those who mislead others, and they will have no helpers* (16:37)—see our discussion of this verse below. Therefore, this does not imply predestination or compulsion on the part of God, where the servant has no say in the matter. On the contrary, the first steps

toward guidance are entirely in the hands of the servant himself, as indicated by the verse, *As for those who strive in Us, We shall surely guide them in Our ways, and Allah is indeed with the virtuous* (29:69). This suggests that divine guidance is within human reach and consists of good deeds; if one acts well, God will be with him and will not allow him to go astray.

The second group among nations consists of those for whom misguidance has been determined, a result of their own poor choices and misdeeds, not the kind of misguidance imposed by God as a punishment. This is evident because the expression used in the text indicates a prior state of being astray—*who deserved to be in error*. Then, in the next verse, God attributes misguidance to Himself, saying: *indeed Allah does not guide those who mislead others* (16:36). Therefore, these servants were already in error, and this misguidance was then confirmed upon them by God as a recompense for their evil deeds. So understand this.

God never attributes misguidance to Himself except in cases preceded by the servant's own wrongdoing, immorality, disbelief, denial, and similar transgressions. For instance, He has said, *and Allah does not guide the wrongdoing lot* (62:5), which clearly shows that not providing guidance is equivalent to leading astray. Also, He has said, *and Allah leads astray the wrongdoers* (14:27); and, *and He leads no one astray thereby except the transgressors* (2:26); and, *Indeed those who are faithless and do wrong, Allah shall never forgive them, nor shall He guide them to any way, except the way to hell* (4:168–169), and, *So when they swerved Allah made their hearts swerve, and Allah does not guide the transgressing lot* (61:5), along with other similar verses.

In the verse in question, God chooses not to phrase it as: 'Then among them are those whom God has guided and others whom He has led astray', even though such an expression would not have been incorrect. This is because while misguidance can be seen as a form of divine retribution and thus attributed to God Almighty, He refrains from articulating it in this manner. The intent is to avoid any misconception that God is the originator of misguidance itself. Instead, the verse initially mentions those whom God has guided and subsequently presents a contrast with those deemed worthy of misguidance. These are individuals who, through their own free will and decision, have opted for misguidance over guidance—essentially choosing not to be guided. In such cases, God, whose essence is to offer

guidance, does not bestow it upon them.

To put it differently, the distinction between the inherent misguidance associated with God's servant and the punitive misguidance attributed to God Almighty lies in the potential and capacity for guidance that God has instilled in humanity. If an individual aligns with their inherent nature, preserves their innate disposition from corruption, does not compromise their potential for guidance by succumbing to whims or engaging in sinful acts, and, should they falter, mends the resulting flaws in their nature through remorse and repentance, then God Almighty will provide guidance. This divine guidance serves as a reward, paralleling the original, innate capacity for guidance that was also a form of initial guidance from God Almighty.

Conversely, if an individual succumbs to personal desires, disobeys their Lord, and progressively erodes the inherent potential for guidance, then the Lord will withhold guidance from them. This self-inflicted misguidance is the consequence of one's detrimental choices. Should the individual persist in their ways without feeling remorse or seeking repentance, God will allow them to remain in their chosen path, solidifying their state of misguidance and this is the form of divine and punitive misguidance.

Some may suggest that potential and capacity inherently possess dual aspects, implying that a person capable of being guided equally possesses the potential for misguidance, with human beings constantly navigating between their existence's positive and negative facets—all of which originate from Almighty God, including their initial potential and capacity.

Nevertheless, it's crucial to recognize that misguidance represents a lack, a void of guidance, rather than an entity in itself. Therefore, it's not accurate to state that God creates misguidance. This perspective reveals the argument's inherent weakness. While it's true that potential has dual aspects, the counterpart of potential for guidance—misguidance—isn't an actual entity attributable to God. It's not a case of God shaping a person's path towards guidance or misguidance. Misguidance, by its nature, signifies the absence of guidance. If we were to treat misguidance as a tangible, affirmative entity, it would no longer represent the absence of guidance, nor would it be misguidance. Instead, guidance and misguidance would be considered two distinct, existent outcomes, akin to the tangible consequences resulting from a stone or a lump of earth, both of which are tangible entities.

Put simply, misguidance gains its meaning in contrast to guidance; it's defined by the lack of the perfection inherent in guidance. Misguidance emerges from the absence of this perfection, making it a concept rooted in non-existence. If we were to regard misguidance as a tangible entity, it would cease to be considered misguidance. Consequently, there would be no distinction between the misguided and the guided, nor between states of misguidance and guidance. The logical approach, then, is to view misguidance as a non-entity, a void, and to acknowledge that an individual's initial straying is a result of their own doing. It's crucial to deliberate on this point meticulously to ensure the integrity of this understanding is maintained.

So travel over the land and then observe how was the fate of the deniers —In this context, the directive to travel seems to be aimed at the idolaters who claimed, 'if God had willed, we would not have worshiped anything other than Him.' The transition from third-person narrative to a direct address serves to deliver a more striking rhetorical impact, reinforcing the statement and concluding the argument decisively.

This statement forms a coherent deduction from the responses provided to the polytheists' argument, both in summary and in depth. Its core message is that the mission and the invitation of the prophets are not under divine duress in such a way that when the command comes to forsake idol worship and the prohibition of what God has permitted, the polytheists are forced into compliance. If they are not coerced into obedience, they argue, 'the invitation does not stem from a prophetic or divine origin, and this individual's claim to be God's messenger is false.' Instead, the prophetic invitation is akin to normal human appeals. God appoints messengers to guide you towards His worship and to urge you away from false gods. The fundamental nature of this invitation is to warn and to offer good news. The proof of this interpretation lies in the remnants of ancient, devastated nations, which bear witness to the consequences of divine retribution. Thus, travel in the earth and witness the fate of those who rejected the truth. This will help you comprehend that the prophets' call is a standard one, grounded in caution and promise. The concept of prophethood, as you perceive it, does not align with reality.

إِن تَحۡرِصۡ عَلَىٰ هُدَاهُمۡ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهۡدِي مَن يُضِلُّ وَمَا لَهُم مِّن نَّٰصِرِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾

(16:37) If you are eager for them to be guided, indeed Allah does not guide those who mislead others, and they will have no helpers.

After describing how earlier nations were divided into two groups, one of which were those upon whom misguidance was affirmed—they were the ones who committed polytheism and uttered the claims we recounted above, similar to the polytheists before them—this verse now states that the affirmation of their misguidance is irreversible and unchangeable. Because, in truth, there is no guide for any creature other than God. Hence, if their guidance was still a possibility, God would have guided them, but He did not and does not; instead, He leads them astray. Since misguidance is incompatible with guidance, there is no hope for their guidance, nor is there any helper to assist them because no one can overpower God.

Thus, the verse consoles and reassures the Messenger of God, advising him not to be overly eager for them to be guided and declares that the divine decree has inscribed misguidance for them, and God does not contradict His decree, for with Him, no word is altered, and He is not unjust to His servants.

Therefore, when it is stated, *If you are eager for them to be guided ...*, the implication is that even if you are eager for their guidance, your eagerness will not benefit them in the slightest. They are not among those for whom guidance is possible, because guidance lies solely in the hands of God, and God has not chosen to guide them but rather to misguide them on account of their own poor choices and misdeeds. Neither does God nullify His own action, nor do they have a helper other than God who could prevail over Him, and it would be contrary to God's statement if He were to guide them Himself.

In relation to these verses, which are divided into three parts, there have been extensive debates among scholars who support the concepts of determinism and free will. Each faction interprets the verses in a manner that aligns with their own theological stance. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, a theologian from the Ashʿarī school, has commented:

"When the polytheists asserted, '*Had Allah wished, we would not have worshiped anything besides Him ...*' they intended to suggest that if both guidance and misguidance, as well as monotheism and polytheism, are decreed by God Almighty, then the dispatch of prophets would be

redundant and meaningless. However, their assertion essentially challenges God's authority, insinuating that humans have the right to question God's judgments and actions. This line of reasoning is fundamentally flawed. It is not our place to interrogate God by inquiring, 'Why have You chosen to do this instead of that?'"

He further explains: 'Therefore, it is evident that God Almighty's condemnation of the polytheists and those who made such statements was not on the grounds of falsehood or because the affairs of guidance and misguidance lie beyond God's control. Instead, the reproach was directed at their belief that this notion could invalidate the rationale behind the prophetic missions, thereby excusing their continued adherence to polytheism and idolatry.'

On the other hand, the Muʿtazilī scholar al-Zamakhsharī commented: 'The polytheists attempted to justify their reprehensible actions by attributing them to God's will, claiming, "If God had willed, we would not have committed such actions." This rhetoric is a continuation of the determinists' narrative, a misconception shared by their predecessors as well. Nonetheless, the role of messengers is merely to deliver the truth. As confirmed by the Qur'an and rational evidence, God does not wish for individuals to engage in polytheism or commit sins. Rather, the messengers underscore the moral reprehensibility of polytheism and affirm God's detachment from the deeds of His servants, emphasizing that these actions are the result of the servants' own free will. God encourages righteous behavior, aids in its realization, cautions against malevolence, and issues warnings of punishment for those who indulge in sinful deeds.'

Nonetheless, the debate between these two factions is extensive and intricate.

As an astute reader, you might recognize that the verses in question aim to address a different point than what these theologians might have perceived. Specifically, they highlight that the polytheists' underlying motive for stating, '*Had Allah wished, we would not have worshiped anything besides Him*', was to discredit the prophets' teachings. They argued that if the prophets' revelations about renouncing polytheism and the forbiddance of what is lawful were accurate, then God would have surely inclined us to refrain from such practices. And if it were His will, we would not have engaged in these actions. Yet, this line of reasoning is flawed.

The question of whether God's will is implicated in the polytheists' idolatrous practices, as determinists suggest, or whether it's entirely uninvolved, with the actions of individuals being their own independent creations, as argued by advocates of free will, goes beyond what the polytheists' dialogue implies. These considerations do not align with the core of the polytheists' arguments. As previously elucidated, a more accurate comprehension of their discourse emerges when one considers the specific context in which their statements were made.

The expression "*and they will have no helpers*" suggests that, in contrast, others possess numerous helpers, not merely one. This is inferred from the context, which emphasizes that the polytheists are utterly devoid of any support, neither singular nor multiple. The statement doesn't merely say they lack a single helper; instead, it articulates they have no helpers, highlighting that, unlike the polytheists, others do have support. This underscores that on the Day of Judgment, while help will be available, the polytheists will find themselves deprived of it. In contrast, those who are not polytheists and have followed Divine guidance will indeed benefit from this assistance. This concept mirrors the scenario depicted in another verse where the wrongdoers express their despair, stating: '*Now we have no intercessors*' (26:100), indicating a similar absence of aid on the Day of Judgment.

These helpers are none other than the noble angels, and other intermediaries of divine success and guidance, with the Almighty God enveloping them with His grace and intercession, as He says: *Indeed We shall help Our messengers and those who have faith in the life of the world and on the day when the witnesses rise up* (40:51).

وَأَقْسَمُواْ بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ لاَ يَبْعَثُ اللَّهُ مَن يَمُوتُ بَلَى وَعْدًا عَلَيْهِ
حَقًّا وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾

(16:38) They swear by Allah with solemn oaths (*jahd aymānihim*) that Allah will not resurrect those who die. Yes indeed, it is a promise binding upon Him, but most people do not know.

In his *Mufradāt*, al-Rāghib says: '*jahd* and *juhd* both mean strength, but *mashaqqa* is more extreme than *jahd*. God says, *They swear by Allah with solemn oaths*, meaning that they swear oaths and go to great efforts

in swearing them to make their oaths as strong as possible.' In *Majmaʿ al-bayān*, al-Ṭabrisī says that the meaning of this phrase is that they took their oaths to the utmost.

The phrase "*that Allah will not resurrect those who die*" constitutes a rejection of both the Resurrection and the Day of Judgment. It implies their belief in death as the ultimate cessation of existence, negating any notion of re-creation post-mortem. This stance does not contradict the prevalent belief in reincarnation among many of them, as reincarnation is distinct from the concept of resurrection and re-creation. Reincarnation posits that the soul of the deceased transitions into a new human or another living form, continuing its existence in this world, a process often described as 'rebirth.'

The phrase "*Yes indeed, it is a promise binding upon Him*" conveys that the reality contradicts their perception. God will assuredly resurrect those who have died, and this commitment is a steadfast and irrevocable promise from God. It signifies that God has obliged Himself to honor this pledge to His servants, ensuring that it remains immutable and unchangeable.

... but most people do not know—Most people remain unaware that God will undeniably fulfill this promise to His servants. This promise is unbreakable, and this decree is unalterable. Their lack of awareness stems from their disregard for God's signs, all of which indicate the inevitability of resurrection and affirm this commitment. These signs encompass the creation of the heavens and the earth, the diversity in human behavior ranging from oppression and injustice to righteousness and benevolence, and the commandments outlined in divine laws.

لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمُ الَّذِى يَخْتَلِفُونَ فِيهِ وَلِيَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوٓاْ أَنَّهُمْ كَانُواْ كَٰذِبِينَ ﴿٣٩﴾

(16:39) That He may clarify for them (*li-yubyyina la-hum*) what they differ about, and that the faithless may know that they were liars.

The preposition *li-* at the beginning of this verse is purposive. This gives the verse the following meaning: 'God will resurrect whoever dies so that He may clarify for them that which they differ upon...' and this purpose, as well as the subsequent one, is in reality a single goal, because the

latter arises from and is a condition of the former. This is because when the disputes of the disbelievers with their prophets are resolved with the advent of the resurrection, they will inevitably understand that they were lying in their denial of resurrection. Likewise, the disputes among people over matters pertaining to the Day of Judgment will be resolved when they witness the state of that Day with their own eyes.

In the speech of God the Exalted, this expression and others like it are repeated frequently so much so that one can consider the issue of resolving disputes and clarifying them as one of the primary features of the Day of Judgment—a day whose severity will not only weigh heavily upon humanity but also upon the heavens and the earth. The detailed accounts that God has given in His Speech regarding this day, such as crossing the bridge (*ṣirāṭ*), the opening of the records of deeds, the weighing of these deeds, reckoning, and the final judgment, are all extensions of this.

It becomes clear—particularly when considering the verses discussing the Day of Judgment—that the word 'differ' mentioned here does not refer to variations in physical attributes like gender, height, or skin color. Instead, the 'dispute' pertains to disagreements about the true faith, encompassing both beliefs and practices. These are the issues that God the Exalted delineated in His Books and articulated through His prophets. This is further affirmed later in the same chapter, where God states, '*We did not send down the Book to you except for the purpose that you may clarify for them what they differ about*' (16:64), underscoring the resolution of disputes concerning religious matters.

For discerning readers, it's evident that the enlightenment God provides on the Day of Resurrection transcends the worldly guidance offered through His Book, the language of the prophets, the imparting of wisdom, the giving of admonitions, and the noble debates they partook in. The clarity to be revealed is far more profound than these earthly mediums of understanding. It's a clarity that can aptly be termed as 'manifest reality,' allowing no space for doubt, uncertainty, or internal conflict. This ultimate transparency is reflected in the verse: '*You were certainly oblivious of this. We have removed your veil from you, and so your sight is acute today*' (50:22), and reiterated in: '*On that day Allah will pay them in full their due recompense, and they shall know that Allah is the Manifest Reality*' (24:25), emphasizing the unmistakable clarity of divine truth.

Hence, on that day, they will witness firsthand the religious truths and teachings they once contested, clearly discerning the merit of righteous deeds from the futility of their persistent misdeeds. The veil of uncertainty will be lifted, laying bare the reality of truth before their eyes.

إِنَّمَا قَوْلُنَا لِشَيْءٍ إِذَا أَرَدْنَاهُ أَن نَّقُولَ لَهُ كُن فَيَكُونُ ﴿٤٠﴾

(16:40) All that We say to a thing, when We will it, is to say to it 'Be!' and it is.

This verse echoes the sentiment of verse 82 from Surah Yā Sīn, which proclaims: *All His command, when He wills something, is to say to it 'Be,' and it is*. By comparing these verses, it becomes apparent that God equates His command (*amr*) with His word (*qawl*). Similarly, He describes His command and word in terms of their absolute power, certainty, and irrevocability, also referring to them as a decree or a judgment. This is reflected in statements like: *though I cannot avail you anything against Allah. Sovereignty belongs only to Allah* (12:67), the warning: *We apprised him of the matter that these will be rooted out by dawn* (15:66), and the declaration: *and when He decides on a matter, He just says to it, 'Be!' and it is* (2:117).

God also describes His divine decree using the term 'word' (*kalima*). As noted in the Qur'an: "*Indeed, Our word has already preceded for Our servants, the messengers, that they will certainly be the victors*" (37:171). Additionally, it is stated: "*Certainly Our decree has gone beforehand in favor of Our servants, the messengers, that they will indeed receive help*" (37:172). Regarding Jesus, it is articulated: "*Indeed the case of Jesus with Allah is like the case of Adam: He created him from dust, then said to him, 'Be,' and he was*" (3:59). Furthermore, in reference to Jesus: "*and His Word that He cast toward Mary and a spirit from Him*" (4:171). These diverse terms—saying, word, command, will, decree—highlight the various manifestations of God's act of creation, emphasizing that all is encompassed and directed by God's sovereign command.

Drawing from these insights, it's understood that God Almighty's act of creation—bestowing existence upon entities, which essentially is their very existence—is encapsulated in His command (*amr*), His utterance (*qawl*), and His word (*kalima*). However, based on the explicit phrasing in the Qur'an, it becomes clear that God's word is specifically manifested

through His saying, characterized by its definitive and decisive nature.

This elucidation reveals that God's will (*irāda*) and His decree (*qaḍā'*) are unified, holding a precedence in the order of existence over His saying and command. Hence, God Almighty initially wills and decrees a matter. Subsequently, He manifests this will through His command, pronouncing 'Be,' and thus, it materializes into existence.

God has demonstrated that nothing can veer away from His command, asserting that His word embodies truth. As it's stated: "*It is He who created the heavens and the earth with reason, and the day He says, 'Be!' it is. His word is the truth*" (6:73). This indicates that His word is not only truth in declaration but also in its manifestation in reality, mirroring the concrete external reality that is His act. Consequently, deviation from His will, the emergence of falsehood, or the presence of invalidity are inconceivable. It's inherently understood that a fact of existence or an established reality is immutable. Hence, God's acts, which are actualities, are devoid of errors or mistakes. His command remains unchallenged, His word unrefuted, and His promise invariably fulfilled.

Drawing from this verse, as well as the preceding one where the polytheists assert, '*Had Allah wished, we would not have worshiped anything besides Him*' (16:35), it's evident that two forms of divine will are ascribed to God. The first is the creative will (*irādat al-takwīnī*), which is absolute and unchangeable. The second is the legislative will (*irādat al-tashrīʿ*), which is subject to human response—it can be met with either compliance or defiance. This topic will be further explored and expanded upon shortly.

Examining Narrations

(1) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, it narrated via his own chain of narration from Abū Jaʿfar, regarding the verse, *Those who were before them had also schemed. Then Allah razed their edifice from the foundations and the roof collapsed upon them from above and the punishment overtook them whence they were not aware*: 'It refers to the house of their schemes, meaning they died, and God caused them to dwell in Hellfire eternally. This is a metaphor for the enemies of the Family of Muḥammad.'

Author's comment: The apparent meaning of this narration is that the phrase, *Then Allah razed their edifice from the foundations* is a metaphor

for the invalidation of their schemes, not their physical homes.

(2) And in *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is narrated from Muḥammad b. Muslim from Abū Jaʿfar, who said: The meaning of *then Allah razed their edifice from the foundations* was the house where they would gather to conspire in harming and oppressing the prophets.

(3) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, concerning the phrase, *Those who were given knowledge will say …*, it is relayed from the Imām: 'The intended referents of *Those who were given knowledge* are the Imāms who will say to their enemies: 'Where are your partners and those whom you obeyed in the world?' … The Imām stated: 'Those whose souls the angels are taking while they are wronging themselves are the same group who, when calamities befall them, submit and say, *'We were not doing any evil!'*—but God rejects their statement, saying: *'Yes, indeed Allah knows best what you used to do!'*

(4) Shaykh al-Ṭūsī narrates in his *Amālī* via his chain of narrators from Abū Isḥāq al-Hamadānī, who narrates from the Commander of the Faithful that, in a letter written to the people of Egypt, he said: 'O servants of God, the moment when a servant is nearest to forgiveness and mercy is when they act in obedience to God and sincerely repent. I adjure you to observe Godwariness, for it encompasses all good, and there is no good beyond it. Through Godwariness, one attains a portion of the good of this world and the hereafter. Indeed, God Almighty has said: *But to those who were Godwary it will be said, 'What is it that your Lord has sent down?' They will say, 'Good.' For those who do good in this world there will be a good reward, and the abode of the Hereafter is better, and the abode of the Godwary is surely excellent* (16:30).

(5) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is narrated via Ibn Miskān from Abū Jaʿfar, concerning the phrase, *and the abode of the Godwary is surely excellent*, it is interpreted to mean this world.

(6) And in *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, concerning the phrase *those whom the angels take away while they are pure*, it is narrated from the Imām that it refers to the believers whose birth in this world is pure.

Author's comment: Given that the earlier phrase, *Those whom the angels take away while they are wronging themselves*, mirrors the verse under discussion, it does not appear that this narration yields a clear meaning.

However, since the narration is weak in any case, this is not a matter of concern.

(7) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is reported by Ibn Abī Ḥātim from al-Sudayy, who related: 'The Quraysh gathered and said among themselves that Muḥammad is a man of sweet speech and when someone converses with him, he influences them so much that it seems as if he takes away their intellect. Therefore, they agreed to select a limited number of their nobles, who were well-known by lineage, and recognizable by strangers, and then every night, or every other night, send them to stand on the roads of Mecca to dissuade the newcomers who come to visit Muḥammad from proceeding. They carried out this plan, and each took position on a road; whenever they saw someone coming from outside Mecca, either to inquire about their relatives or to personally see Muḥammad, they would approach, introduce themselves as recognized individuals, and then say, "I inform you about the situation with Muḥammad: he is a liar, followed only by the foolish, the senseless, a bunch of slaves, or those devoid of any good. The elders and dignitaries of his people have all turned away from him." They would fabricate such lies to turn the person away right from the middle of the road. And the verse *When they are told, 'What is it that your Lord has sent down?' They say, 'Myths of the ancients,'* was revealed concerning this matter.

If such an individual, one whom God wished to guide, were to enter among the skeptics, he would respond: "We have come as ambassadors on behalf of our people, and what poor ambassadors we would be if, after traveling such a great distance —now less than a day's journey away —we were to return without having met this man to hear what he has to say, so we could convey his message to our people. No, this cannot be; we must see this man and speak with him, then bring his news back to our people." And this they did. Upon entering the city of Mecca, they would meet with the followers of that esteemed person and inquire, "What does Muḥammad say?" They would reply, "He speaks of goodness and gives glad tidings that for anyone who does good, there is prosperity and a comfortable life in this world, and certainly, the

home in the afterlife, which is paradise, is even better."

Author's comment: The story seems credible, however the latter most part, which interprets the term 'good' as material wealth, is unacceptable.

(8) In *al-Kāfī*, al-Kulaynī relates via his chain of narrators from Ṣafwān b. Yaḥyā, it is narrated that he said: I asked Abū al-Ḥasan, 'What is the difference between the will of God and the will of His creatures?' He replied, 'The will of creatures consists of the intention within the heart and the actions that follow it, whereas the will of God Almighty is the act of bringing into existence and creating, nothing else. For God does not think or decide, and such attributes are far removed from His sacred essence. Indeed, these are the attributes of His creations. Thus, the will of God is His act itself, nothing else. Whatever He wills, He says 'Be,' and it is. Moreover, even this saying is not by voice or word, nor by intention or thought, and it cannot even be described how it is, for God is beyond the 'how.'"

(9) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, al-Suyūṭī reports that Aḥmad and Tirmidhī (who considered the chain of narration good), Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ibn Mardawayh, and al-Bayhaqī in the book *Shu'ub al-Īmān*, all have transmitted from Abū Dharr, who quotes the Messenger of God as saying: 'God Almighty says to the children of Adam: "O children of Adam, all of you are sinners except for those whom I have forgiven. Therefore, seek My forgiveness, and I shall forgive you. All of you are needy except for those whom I have enriched. Hence, ask of Me, and I shall give to you. And all of you are astray except for those whom I have guided. Thus, ask for My guidance, and I shall guide you. And whoever seeks My forgiveness, knowing that I am able to forgive, I shall forgive him and I have no reservations in doing so.

And if the first and the last, the living and the dead, the moist and the dry among you were all to gather together to maintain the most wretched among you in his wretchedness, they would not diminish My dominion or power even by the weight of a mosquito. And if I wish, I can incline him toward good. And if the first and the last, the living and the dead, the moist and the dry among you were to unite their hearts to assist the most righteous among you, they would not increase My dominion or power even by the

weight of a mosquito. Thus, your aid has no effect on the power of God. And if the first and the last, the living and the dead, the moist and the dry among you were all to ask of Me so that there would be no request left, and I were to grant the requests of all of you, it would not diminish from My vast sea of generosity even by the amount that a needle reduces from the sea when it enters the water. This is because I am Generous, Majestic, and Unique. My giving is a word and My punishment is a word. My command for something when I will it is merely to say 'Be', and it immediately comes into existence.'

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Verses 41–64

The initial two verses of this section highlight the concept of migration, offering a rewarding promise to those who undertake the journey for God, both in this life and the hereafter. The subsequent verses address the issue of polytheism (that is, associating partners with God) and unauthorized legislation by the people, elaborating on the response to idolaters who perceived the prophetic invitation to forsake the worship of false gods and the forbidding of what God has not prohibited as unfeasible. This is indicated in the phrase "*And those who associated partners (with Allah) said*," and so forth.

وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُواْ فِي اللَّهِ مِن بَعْدِ مَا ظُلِمُواْ لَنُبَوِّئَنَّهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَلَأَجْرُ الآخِرَةِ أَكْبَرُ لَوْ كَانُواْ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤١﴾

(16:41) And those who migrated for God after they had been wronged, We will surely settle them in this world in a good place; but the reward of the Hereafter is greater, if only they knew.

This verse extends a beautiful promise to the Emigrants (those who embarked on migration for the sake of God). The believers undertook two significant migrations from Mecca. The initial journey led a group of believers to Abyssinia, a refuge sanctioned by God and His Prophet, where they sought respite from the persecution and oppression of the Meccan polytheists.

The subsequent migration was from Mecca to Medina, aligning with the Prophet's own migration. The verse, in its context, seems to resonate more closely with this latter migration. The surrounding verses lend themselves more fittingly to the events and circumstances of the migration to Medina than to the earlier journey to Abyssinia.

The term "for God" (*fi Allah*) in conjunction with "migrated" emphasizes that their migration was driven purely by the desire to gain God's pleasure, without any ulterior motives. This is akin to phrases like "He traveled in pursuit of knowledge," or "He left in search of livelihood," where the

primary objective is the pursuit of knowledge or livelihood. The subsequent part, "*after they had been wronged*," is similarly tied to this singular purpose. Thus, the comprehensive interpretation of the statement would be: "And those who migrated for God after they had been wronged for His cause." The passage is deliberately concise, serving as a succinct descriptor of migration. This conciseness is fitting since migration, as a test of faith, merits specific mention of the circumstances surrounding it.

Regarding the phrase: "*We will surely settle them in this world in a good place*," some have said that it means a good land, replacing what they left behind, like Mecca and its surroundings, as implied by "*We will surely settle them*," because to settle someone in a place means to make it suitable and comfortable for them.

Alternatively, it has been interpreted to mean a good state, like victory and triumph, thus making "We will surely settle them," etc., a metaphorical expression.

In essence, both interpretations arrive at a similar conclusion: the Emigrants' journey aimed to create an exemplary Islamic society, devoted to the worship of God and grounded in justice and compassion. Whether their ultimate aspiration was to achieve a noble purpose or to commend the destination for its virtues, it was centered around the formation of a just and righteous community. Their praise for the place of their migration was not for its material benefits, like water or climate, but for the Islamic community they aspired to establish there. Therefore, the 'good' reward promised by God in this world is essentially the fruition of the community they endeavored to build, regardless of whether the term 'good' is interpreted as referring to the physical locality or the ultimate objective.

"*And the reward of the Hereafter is greater, if only they knew*" completes the promise and indicates that the reward of the Hereafter is better than this worldly reward, if only they knew what blessings God has prepared for them therein, for it includes happiness without hardship, eternal life without end, pleasure unmarred by pain, and nearness to the Lord of the Worlds.

الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا۟ وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾

(16:42) Those who endured and upon their Lord they rely

The context of the two verses suggests a focus on the promised reward, both worldly and heavenly, for anyone who migrates for God. This assurance is not contingent on the actual act of migration at the time of this proclamation. The verse essentially conveys: "Whoever migrates for God shall receive such rewards." Hence, the phrase "Those who endured, etc." is primarily intended to characterize the Emigrants as individuals of patience and reliance on God, without delving into the specific adversities they faced while residing among the polytheists prior to their migration.

The highlighting of these traits is crucial, as they are fundamental to the attainment of the promised prosperous outcome. Without enduring the rigors of striving in God's cause, without resisting despair in the face of tribulations, and without depending on God rather than their own limited strength, they would have faltered. Their community, built through migration, would not have sustained, their adversaries would have scattered them, and the virtuous society they forged would have crumbled in this world, consequently forfeiting their rewards in the Hereafter.

However, if the verse aims to promise those who had already migrated prior to its revelation—acknowledging their sacrifices, their forfeiture of homes and wealth, and their perseverance through trials and adversities—then the phrase "Those who endured and upon their Lord they rely" serves as commendation. It recognizes their endurance against the polytheists' hostility in Mecca for the sake of God and their steadfast reliance on God throughout their journey of adherence to Islam.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِن قَبْلِكَ إِلاَّ رِجَالاً نُّوحِى إِلَيْهِمْ فَاسْأَلُواْ أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِن كُنتُمْ لاَ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾

(16:43) And We sent not before you but men to whom We revealed. So ask the people of the remembrance if you do not know

This is a reiteration of the explanation of how messengers were sent and scriptures revealed, to clarify for the polytheists that religious call was but a normal call from men who received revelation, men of their own kind, who advocated what was beneficial for people in their worldly and afterlife affairs.

None of the messengers, nor any scripture of the laws, claimed that

the religious call was a manifestation of the overwhelming invisible power that controls everything, or a creative will to demolish the ongoing natural order and invalidate the principle of human free will. This counters the claim of those of them who said: *Had Allah wished, we would not have worshiped anything besides Him...*"

Thus, when God says: *And We sent not before you but men to whom We revealed* (16:35), this is intended to limit the role of messengership to ordinary human beings, men who received revelations, contrary to the polytheists' claim that were divine revelation to occur it would represent a disruption of the natural order and an invalidation of human free will.

This demonstrates the incorrectness of what some have claimed, namely that the verse was intended to refute the polytheists of Quraysh, who believed that humans were unfit for messengership and that it should be the role of God's angels. The verse shows that the Divine modus operandi, according to God's infinite wisdom, has always been to send only men from among humans as messengers, to whom knowledge, commands, and prohibitions are revealed.

The context of the verses does not support this interpretation, nor is there any mention in the previous conversation of their claim or proposal to send angels for messengership, to direct the statement to that.

What preceded is the polytheists' statement: "*Had Allah wished, we would not have worshiped anything besides Him...*, which was intended to prove the impossibility of prophethood, not arguing that it was the responsibility of angels rather than mortal men.

This verse has been cited by some as proof that God Almighty exclusively appointed men, not children or women, as messengers. Nevertheless, the unique case of Jesus's prophethood during his infancy can be understood by distinguishing between the concepts of prophethood and messengership. Prophethood encompasses a broader scope than messengership. When Jesus declared, "*Indeed, I am the servant of Allah. He has given me the scripture and made me a prophet*" (19:30), he was referencing his prophethood, which does not necessarily equate to the role of a messenger.

The logic presented in this verse stems from the phrase: "*And We sent not before you but men to whom We revealed...*" This term, as utilized in the Qur'an, encompasses not just the messenger but also the prophet who does not hold the status of a messenger, as mentioned in the Qur'an: "*And*

We did not send before you any messenger or prophet... (22:52)." Should this interpretation hold, it would suggest that both messengership and prophethood are roles not designated for children or women. However, this notion is challenged by the instances where God speaks of Jesus: "*Indeed, I am the servant of Allah. He has given me the scripture and made me a prophet* (19:30)," and of John: "*And We gave him judgment while a boy* (19:12)," indicating their early divine appointments.

In essence, the verse "*And We sent not before you but men...*" serves to underscore that the messengers were mere mortals, without specifically highlighting the age at which they commenced their missions. The primary objective is to illustrate that figures like Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and John—who were messengers—were ordinary men graced with revelations. They were not beings endowed with extraordinary, unseen forces or divine powers of creation.

This is similar to another verse: *And We sent not before you but men to whom We revealed. So ask the people of the reminder* (ahl al-dhikr) *if you do not know. And We did not make them bodies that did not eat food, nor were they immortals* (21:8).

The statement: *So ask the people of the reminder if you do not know* apparently addresses the Prophet Muḥammad and his people. The conversation was previously directed specifically at the Prophet, but the meaning was intended for everyone. Hence, the address is generalized to include everyone, so each person among the addressed can choose their path. Those who do not know, like some polytheists, should refer to the people of the reminder and ask them. Those who are aware, like the Prophet and those who believe in him, do not need to seek advice or ask questions.

The directive: "*So ask the people of the reminder if you do not know*," ostensibly addresses both Prophet Muhammad and his people. While the preceding dialogue was aimed directly at the Prophet, its intended message is universal. Consequently, the instruction broadens to encompass all individuals, granting each the autonomy to navigate their own path. Those in ignorance, such as certain polytheists, are encouraged to consult the people of the reminder for inquiries. Conversely, those already enlightened, like the Prophet and his followers, have no need for external counsel or inquiries.

It's argued by some that this verse is directed at the polytheists,

positioning them as the skeptics who should seek insights from others. However, such an interpretation suggests a transition in the addressee from a singular individual to a collective group, a shift for which there seems to be no clear justification.

The concept of *dhikr* ("reminder") involves the retention or recall of information. It also pertains to the tools or methods facilitating such retention or recall. Al-Rāghib, in his *Mufradāt*, states: "The term *dhikr* can sometimes signify a mental state that assists an individual in maintaining acquired knowledge. This concept is akin to memorization (*hifz*), with the distinction that memorization relates to the initial acquisition of knowledge, while *dhikr* pertains to its subsequent retrieval. At times, *dhikr* may refer to the mental or verbal presence of a concept. Consequently, *dhikr* is categorized into two primary types: inward remembrance (in the heart) and outward remembrance (verbal articulation). Each category further divides into two subsets: remembrance as a counteraction to forgetfulness and remembrance as a proactive measure for sustained retention."

Hence, the term "reminder" is indicative of its role in transmitting meaning and embedding it within the mind. Predominantly, in the context of the Qur'an, it's employed in relation to the remembrance of God. Consequently, whenever *dhikr* is mentioned in the Qur'an without explicit context, it generally denotes the act of remembering God.

In this vein, the Qur'an, along with the prophetic revelations and scriptures bestowed upon the prophets, are also termed "reminders." While there are many verses supporting this notion, it's not necessary to enumerate them here. Notably, God refers to the Qur'an as a "reminder" in the subsequent verse.

The Qur'an serves as a reminder, much like Noah's Book, Abraham's Scrolls, Moses' Torah, David's Psalms, and Jesus' Gospel—peace be upon him—all of which are divine scriptures acknowledged in the Qur'an. They all function as reminders. Individuals who engage with these texts and uphold their teachings are recognized as "the people of the reminder."

Considering that experts of a subject are profoundly acquainted with its nuances and possess comprehensive knowledge about its intricacies, it's logical to refer to them for deeper understanding. Individuals who diligently study, comprehend, and adhere to the principles of the heavenly scriptures are the true connoisseurs of these texts and the prophets who

introduced them. Therefore, those eager to deepen their understanding of these sacred texts and prophetic teachings should turn to these well-versed experts for insight.

Nonetheless, the polytheists, who were the intended recipients of directives like: "So ask the people of the reminder," did not recognize Prophet Muhammad's prophethood, nor did they accept his claims. They even derided the Qur'an, referred to as the "reminder," as evidenced in their taunt: "*O you to whom the reminder has been sent down, indeed, you are mad...*" (15:6). Given this context, the exhortation: "So ask the people of the reminder" seems to be directed specifically at the followers of the Torah. This is especially pertinent considering that these individuals, despite being adversaries of the Prophet and rejecting his prophethood, were viewed more favorably by the polytheists, as indicated by their assertion: "*These are more guided than those who believe*" (4:51).

There's a notion that the term "the people of the reminder" encompasses those well-versed in the histories of bygone civilizations, regardless of their faith or lack thereof. Here, "reminder" symbolizes knowledge, as understanding typically arises from recollecting what has been signified, essentially equating to attributing the effect to its cause.

However, this interpretation seems to be a metaphorical stretch, lacking a convincing context to justify such a reading. Particularly, when considering the typical usage of 'reminder' in the Noble Qur'an, this interpretation does not seem to resonate with the conventional narrative.

There's a perspective that "the people of the reminder" denotes the followers of the Qur'an, considering God has labeled it a reminder. This group would encompass the Prophet, his companions, and the believers. While it's undeniable that the Qur'an is a reminder and its adherents are rightfully its people, construing the verse exclusively in this context doesn't fully bolster the argument. Given that the primary audience of this message did not recognize the Prophet's prophethood, it seems implausible that they would accept insights from his followers, the believers.

Regardless, the verse imparts a universally sensible principle: the imperative for those lacking knowledge to consult those with expertise. The directive inferred from the verse isn't a religious decree per se, nor is the instruction for the uninformed to seek answers from scholars, or specifically from "the people of the reminder," a divinely legislated command.

This should be evidently clear.

بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالزُّبُرِ وَأَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾

(16:44) with manifest proofs and scriptures. We have sent down the reminder to you so that you may clarify for the people that which has been sent down to them, so that they may reflect.

The phrase "*With manifest proofs and scriptures...*" connects back to the subject introduced in the preceding verse: "*And We have sent before you...*" It essentially conveys: "We dispatched them with manifest proofs and scriptures." These represent unequivocal evidence of their prophethood and the divine scriptures entrusted to them. The primary intent of the previous verse was to emphasize that the messengers were mere mortals. Consequently, this might have prompted the query: with what authority or evidence were these messengers sent? The response is encapsulated in the phrase, indicating they were sent with indisputable proofs and sacred texts. The proofs served to validate their prophethood, while the scriptures ensured the perpetuation of their teachings.

There's a viewpoint that associates the phrase with "And We have not sent..." interpreted as, 'We have not dispatched anyone with clear proofs and scriptures, except for "men to whom We have revealed."' While this reading is acceptable on its own, it doesn't fully capture the nuanced implication previously discussed.

The phrase: *We have sent down the reminder to you so that you may explain for the people that which has been sent down to them, so that they may reflect*, undoubtedly indicates that the revelation of the scripture to the people and the descent of the reminder to the Prophet are one and the same. The revelation to the people is through him so that they may adopt it and implement it in practice, as stated: *O mankind, there has come to you a conclusive proof from your Lord, and We have sent down to you a clear light* (4:174) and *Indeed, We have sent down to you a Book in which is your mention. Then will you not reason?* (21:10).

At its core, the message of this reminder is universal, applying equally to you and all people. Your role as the chosen messenger is not to wield divine, unseen powers or a creative will that grants dominion over others.

Rather, your mission is twofold:

Firstly, your purpose is to elucidate the revelations progressively bestowed upon humanity. Divine knowledge (or wisdom) is not inherently accessible to people without a mediator. Thus, a messenger is appointed to interpret and impart this knowledge. Your responsibility is to receive, disseminate, and elucidate the revelations, (bridging the gap between the divine and the human.)

Secondly, your mission aims to inspire contemplation and realization among the people that the teachings you present are indeed divine truth. The trajectory of your life—marked by orphanhood, anonymity, lack of formal education, absence of a righteous guardian, poverty, and your existence among the unenlightened and the deprived, devoid of the fruits of civilization and noble virtues—served as undeniable proof that you could not have accessed or acquired such profound wisdom on your own. Yet, it was God Almighty who graced you with a reminder, a scripture that challenges both jinn and mankind, surpasses all prior divine texts, and serves as a comprehensive guide, a source of mercy, an irrefutable argument, and a beacon of clear illumination.

Consequently, contemplating your life and circumstances serves as a compelling guide to the realization that your contributions were not of your own making. It underscores that you played no part in crafting the message you delivered, affirming that what you brought forth originated solely from God's knowledge. He revealed it through His omniscience and upheld you with His omnipotence, entirely independent of conventional influences or causes.

Taking into account the context of this verse and the ones preceding it, the underlying message is that the phrase "so that you may explain" delineates the ultimate purpose of the revelation. This purpose is not centered on the revelation itself but is intrinsically linked to the persona of the Prophet. The implicit subject of "they might reflect" is construed as something akin to "on you," as opposed to "on the reminder."

Nonetheless, some have posited that the phrase "so that you may explain" signifies the ultimate aim of the revelation, with the intended contemplation being directed at the reminder itself, to recognize its authenticity as a divine revelation. Under this interpretation, the verse's essence would be: "And We have sent down to you the reminder," referring to the

Qur'an, "so you may elucidate for all people the contents of that reminder. This includes the fundamental principles of knowledge, statutes, legislative frameworks, accounts of previous civilizations, and the patterns of divine interaction observed among them. The aspiration is that they will ponder upon the reminder, to discern its veracity as originating from God, or deliberate over the matters you elucidate to them."

Yet, a discerning reader will recognize that this interpretation inherently implies a redundancy. It suggests the revelation was sent to the Prophet to elucidate what has already been revealed to the people, despite the revelation being singular. The only way to reconcile this apparent redundancy is to modify the phrasing to something akin to: "And We have sent down to you the reminder so that you may elucidate it for them."

أَفَأَمِنَ الَّذِينَ مَكَرُواْ السَّيِّئَاتِ أَن يَخْسِفَ اللَّهُ بِهِمُ الأَرْضَ أَوْ يَأْتِيَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لاَ يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾

(16:45) Did those who plotted evil deeds then feel secure that Allah would not cause the earth to swallow them, or that punishment would come upon them unexpectedly?

This verse, along with the two that follow it, serves as a stark warning and threat directed at the polytheists. These individuals, who dedicated their worship to others besides God and established their own laws and rituals, adhered to their self-created customs, turning their backs on the divine statutes delivered through the prophets. They justified their actions with groundless and self-concocted arguments. All their behaviors, whether in action or inaction, in giving or withholding, in doing or refraining, were marred by sin. Paramount among these was their arrogance and conceit, a conscious defiance against God and His messengers who called them towards God and the path of righteousness.

Hence, in the noble verse, the phrase "evil deeds" serves as the direct object of "plotted," indicating not just contemplation but actual actions. Thus, "who plotted evil deeds" translates to "they executed evil deeds with deceit." The interpretation by some commentators suggesting that "evil deeds" functions as an adjective replacing an absolute object, leading to the rendering "who plotted evil plots," does not align with the verse's context and is deemed inaccurate.

In short, the verse threatens and warns the polytheists, including those of Mecca, of divine punishment. This statement is a continuation of the previous topics, hence the use of "then" as a mark of consequence, as in *then feel secure.*

The essence of the verse is that, with evident signs confirming God as the sole Lord, unrivaled in His Lordship, and the realization that prophethood is not merely plausible but a call towards what benefits humankind in both worldly matters and the hereafter—delivered by individuals chosen and guided by God—how then could those who deliberately turn away from this divine call feel secure? Those who, through deception, oppose God and His messenger, resorting to fallacious reasoning to justify abandoning their faith, enacting arbitrary laws, and indulging in sinful acts, how could they presume safety from God's might, that He wouldn't cause the earth beneath them to give way or unleash unforeseen punishment upon them?

أَوْ يَأْخُذَهُمْ فِي تَقَلُّبِهِمْ فَمَا هُم بِمُعْجِزِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾

(16:46) Or that He might seize them during their movements (taqallubi-him) so that they could not escape.

In this context, "He might seize them" unmistakably points to God Almighty, with the Qur'an often attributing the act of seizing (*akhdh*) to Him. However, some interpreters contend that the true subject is "punishment," implying that "the punishment might seize them." The term *taqallub* ("movements") encapsulates the notion of fluctuating states, reflecting the polytheists' constant shifts in their reprehensible intentions and deeds, as they oscillate among various worldly pleasures. This notion aligns with the message conveyed elsewhere in the Qur'an: "*Let not the free movement of the disbelievers throughout the land deceive you; It is but a small enjoyment; then their final abode is Hell, and wretched is the resting place*" (3:197), underscoring the transient nature of their earthly pursuits.

Thus, the meaning of *seizing them during their movements* is that God (or alternatively, the punishment) intercepts them amidst their engagement in sin and their conspiracies against God and His messenger. It's conceivable that this refers to God meting out punishment through the very blessings they revel in, transforming these supposed blessings into

sources of affliction. This interpretation resonates more profoundly with the phrase "they could not escape."

The phrase "they could not escape" justifies the act of seizing them amidst their maneuvers and duplicitous deeds, signifying their inability to thwart God's power, whether by overpowering Him or by eluding His will. The meaning is clear.

أَوْ يَأْخُذَهُمْ عَلَىٰ تَخَوُّفٍ فَإِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ لَرَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٤٧﴾

(16:47) Or He might seize them with fear (*'alā takhawwuf*), for indeed your Lord is Kind and Merciful.

The term *takhawwuf* ("fear") denotes the instillation and presence of fear in the heart. Thus, being seized with fear signifies a punishment preceded by apprehension, where early indicators emerge, offering an opportunity for those concerned to avert its full onset through acts of repentance, remorse, and the like. In this sense, being seized with fear stands in contrast to the abrupt onset of punishment; the former entails a forewarned punishment, while the latter descends suddenly, without any forewarning.

Some interpretations suggest that being seized with fear refers to experiencing terrifying yet non-fatal events, such as earthquakes or storms.

Others have interpreted *takhawwuf* as diminution, suggesting that God subjects them to a gradual depletion of blessings. This could manifest as a sequential withdrawal of life's comforts: initially stripping away security, then curtailing rainfall, diminishing prosperity and abundance, and ultimately impacting physical health, among other things.

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَىٰ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ مِن شَيْءٍ يَتَفَيَّأُ ظِلَالُهُ عَنِ الْيَمِينِ وَالشَّمَائِلِ سُجَّدًا لِلَّهِ وَهُمْ دَاخِرُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾

(16:48) Do they not see how everything God created casts its shadow (*yatafayyu' zilalu-hu*) right and left (*'an al-yamīn wa al-shamā'il*), prostrating (*dakhirīn*) to God in humility?

In this context, "see" points to the physical and sensory recognition of objects, directing focus not towards the shadows, but towards the entities that cast these shadows.

Tafayyu' is derived from *fay'*, indicating a shadow in motion, commonly

associated with shadows from the afternoon until the day's end. As noted earlier, the term *zill* ("shadow") has a broader meaning than *fay'*. The verse reinforces this notion, implying that *tafayyu'* pertains to the shadow's movement or shift during the afternoon hours.

Shamā'il, the plural of *shimāl* ("left"), contrasts with *yamīn* ("right"). The plural usage signifies the encompassment of all sides deemed to be on the left, juxtaposed with the right. This stems from the concept that an object casting multiple shadows is perceived as producing distinct shadows on both its left and right sides. Hence, each individual shadow on the left and right is considered separate, although the term 'thing' is mentioned in the singular form but implies a plural connotation. The term *dakhirīn* symbolizes submission and humility.

This verse highlights that every part of creation, as evidenced by their shadows shifting throughout the day, is in a state of perpetual prostration and submission to God.

The specific verse, "*Do they not see how everything God created casts its shadow right and left, prostrating to God in humility?*" addresses the polytheists who reject the concepts of monotheism and prophethood. It urges them to consider the natural world, where the mere motion of shadows, oscillating from side to side, signifies a natural state of obeisance and humility towards the divine majesty. This phenomenon mirrors the act of prostration and submission performed universally by all beings, encompassing both terrestrial and celestial entities, from animals to angels.

Therefore, the verse poses a question to the polytheists: If the natural world evidently submits to God, with even shadows prostrating before God, why do they deny it? It underscores that all entities, whether on Earth or in the heavens, are in a state of obedience to Him. This includes even those entities that polytheists have mistakenly revered – be it angels, jinn, or revered humans – all are bound by submission to God.

All these entities inherently display their submission and obedience to God's will, manifesting their reverence through these instinctive gestures of worship. This natural phenomenon vividly demonstrates the existence of a sole sovereign, God Almighty, underscoring His rightful claim to be worshiped and approached with utmost humility. Such acts of submission and prostration encapsulate the core principles of monotheism and the teachings of the prophets, which, regrettably, the polytheists reject.

Fundamentally, monotheism is the recognition and acceptance of God Almighty as the sole entity deserving of our submission and reverence. In parallel, the core of religion, as preached by the prophets, revolves around acknowledging and adhering to God's commandments.

Hence, the verse conveys: "*Do they*—these polytheists, who reject the concept of a singular Lord and dismiss the message of the prophets, not see—have they not witnessed—*how everything God created*—from towering structures like mountains and edifices to trees and any upright form on the earth's terrain—*casts its shadow*—and shifts and oscillates—*right and left*, *prostrating to God*—falling to the ground in an act of worship and veneration towards Him, the Exalted—*in humility?*—submissive and filled with awe."

The discussion on the meaning of the shadows' prostration under the saying of God: *And their shadows in the mornings and the afternoons* (13:15) has already been discussed in this commentary.

وَلِلَّهِ يَسْجُدُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مِن دَابَّةٍ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَهُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾ يَخَافُونَ رَبَّهُم مِّن فَوْقِهِمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

(16:49-50) And to Allah prostrates whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth of creatures, and the angels, and they are not arrogant. They fear their Lord above them, and do what they are commanded.

The previous verse discussed the bowing of shadows, symbolizing an abstract form of prostration to God. Following this, the verse highlights the actual prostration of all beings in the heavens and on earth, encompassing every living entity—defined as anything capable of movement and transition from one position to another. This real act of prostration signifies profound humility and absolute submission to the grandeur and splendor of the Divine. Therefore, a physical act of prostration, where one falls face down to the ground, is deemed an act of worship only when it truly represents this deep humility, making such reverence the true essence of prostration.

Humans and jinn are encompassed within the broader classification of creatures, as the Almighty characterizes them in ways that suggest mobility, akin to other beings like animals. On the contrary, angels are not broadly

categorized as creatures but are referred to distinctly. This nuanced distinction hints that the actions ascribed to angels in divine speech—such as descending, ascending, and traversing—differ fundamentally from the physical, spatial movements associated with earthly creatures.

Therefore, the verse "*And to God prostrates whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth of creatures, and the angels...*" signifies that every being in the heavens and on earth inherently surrenders and adheres to God's command, epitomizing the genuine essence of prostration. It underscores that worship and prostration are exclusively due to God.

Additionally, this verse hints at the presence of life forms in celestial realms beyond Earth, pointing to the existence of life beyond our known world.

... and the angels, and they are not arrogant: Arrogance (*istikbār*) in humans is deemed a negative trait, as it reflects an attitude of self-perceived superiority and an unwarranted assumption of a higher status. While *kibriyā'* can describe God's inherent majesty, it's appropriate because God is truly supreme and exalted. The term *mustakbir* (arrogant) isn't used for God since arrogance suggests an aspiration to greatness, hinting at an absence of inherent grandeur. Arrogance is reproachable because it involves a baseless assertion of dominance rooted in vanity. Conversely, *takabbur* (pride) might signify a rightful display of inherent worthiness, which is fitting and just in the context of God but objectionable in humans.

Hence, arrogance is universally censured, whereas pride is context-dependent; it's objectionable when exhibited by anyone other than God. Arrogance can manifest in attitudes towards fellow beings or towards the Creator.

Arrogance towards fellow beings is reprehensible. It implies a sense of superiority, ignoring the reality that both the arrogant individual and those they belittle are equally reliant and lack control over their own fortunes or misfortunes. This form of arrogance is essentially an act of overstepping and injustice.

Conversely, arrogance towards the Creator is particularly deplorable as it denotes a false sense of self-reliance and denial of dependence, showcasing a profound misunderstanding of the Creator's omnipotence. The fundamental dynamic between a servant and their Lord is marked by humility on one side and absolute authority on the other, dependency on one side and

complete self-sufficiency on the other. Recognizing and reflecting upon this dynamic naturally fosters a disposition of humility and precludes any notions of defying or challenging the Creator.

When splendor and loftiness belong solely to God, any attempt by an individual to claim these attributes is essentially a defiance of the Lord, an encroachment upon His unique status, and an exhibition of arrogance towards Him. This arrogance is not just in attitude but also manifests in behavior, as it leads one to ignore God's commands and overlook His prohibitions. Such defiance can only stem from a deluded perception of possessing a will that operates independently or even contrary to God's will.

Therefore, the characterization of angels as "*and they are not arrogant*," especially within the context of their devotion to God, serves as a testament to their unwavering submission. It confirms that angels consistently honor their Creator, maintaining constant awareness and remembrance of His sovereignty, and never displaying arrogance towards Him.

The verse under discussion unequivocally asserts that angels are devoid of arrogance, both in their essence and in their conduct. It clearly communicates that angels do not exhibit arrogance towards God; they are constantly mindful of Him, thus lacking arrogance in their nature, and their actions consistently align with worship and obedience, never contravening His directives. To reinforce this comprehensive negation of arrogance, the Qur'an adds: "*They fear their Lord above them, and do what they are commanded.*" The initial segment of this statement rejects the notion of inherent arrogance among angels, while the latter part dismisses the possibility of arrogance in their deeds. The expression "*They fear their Lord above them*" underscores the angels' profound reverence for God. Given that God is the embodiment of benevolence, and the reference here is to the fear of God Himself rather than the dread of His retribution—as expressed in other verses like "They hope for His mercy and fear His punishment" (17:57)—this fear is fundamentally a reverence for God Himself. Despite God being the epitome of benevolence, their fear stems from an acknowledgment of God's immense power and grandeur.

This fear represents the innate sense of humility, reverence, and diminution felt in the presence of the Almighty and Sublime. It is the heart's profound response when confronted with an overwhelming Superior Force. The angels' fear is a deep-seated reaction, born from continually

beholding the majestic stature of their Lord and never losing sight of His omnipotence.

The inclusion of the qualifier "above them" with the phrase "They fear their Lord" underscores that the angels' reverence originates from God's supreme and dominant position over them. This fear is a response to God's elevated stature, not a fear of potential punishment. It's a fundamental quality, essentially highlighting their total lack of innate arrogance.

The phrase "and they do what they are commanded" reflects the absence of practical arrogance. As mentioned, a servant devoid of any intrinsic arrogance towards the Almighty naturally won't show any active rebellion either. Thus, in the verse's discussion of angels, after intrinsic arrogance is negated, active defiance is also dismissed. The phrase "They do not disobey God but do whatever they are commanded" emphasizes this. The use of the passive form "what they are commanded" rather than "what God commands them" serves to further elevate God's status, which is obvious.

It's clear that angels represent a unique creation of God, perpetually mindful of Him. They are immune to forgetfulness, distraction, or negligence, fully engrossed in fulfilling God's will.

The emphasis on angels in the context of prostration is deliberate. It addresses the idolaters' misconceptions, as they often revered deities representing various elements like the heavens, earth, sustenance, or beauty. Highlighting the angels' prostration serves a dual purpose: firstly, to refute the idol worshipers' beliefs by clarifying that angels, unlike their deified counterparts, are profoundly devoted to serving God. Secondly, it underscores the fact that angels, among all beings, are the most deeply committed to their servitude to the Almighty.

Some commentators interpret this verse intriguingly, proposing that angels, akin to humans, are bound by duties and dwell in a state of fear and hope. They infer this from the verse's portrayal of angels as beings who follow commands, suggesting a sense of duty. Additionally, the mention of fear in relation to the angels implies the presence of hope, as fear typically accompanies the anticipation of hope.

Nonetheless, this argument doesn't hold up when considering that the Qur'an often uses the imperative form without implying actual obligation. This is evident in verses addressing inanimate entities like the heavens and

the earth. For example, in "*He said to it and to the earth: 'Come willingly or unwillingly.' They both said: 'We come willingly*'" (41:11), and "*And the day He says, 'Be,' and it is*" (6:73), the imperative form is used, but it doesn't imply a sense of duty or obligation.

Regarding the notion that fear inherently suggests hope, this typically pertains to the fear of divine retribution or impending adversity. However, we've earlier clarified that the fear referenced in the verse is an intrinsic fear, born from a profound reverence in the face of God's majesty and magnificence. It represents the emotional response and deference of the weak before the powerful, the reverence of those humbled before the awe-inspiring might and splendor of the Almighty. This type of fear is distinct and does not inherently imply the presence of hope.

Some interpret this verse as implying that angels are superior to humans, but this interpretation isn't entirely accurate. The verse simply points out that angels are above those humans who are sinful and lack faith, as it's within a context of praise, and such individuals don't share the commendable traits of angels. However, the verse doesn't make a statement about the standing of angels relative to virtuous and faithful humans. A more in-depth analysis of the nature and status of angels will be addressed in a later section.

وَقَالَ اللَّهُ لاَ تَتَّخِذُواْ إِلَهَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ إِنَّمَا هُوَ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ فَإِيَّايَ فَارْهَبُونِ ﴿٥١﴾

(16:51) And God said, "Do not take two gods. Indeed, He is one God, so fear only Me (*fa-iyyāya farhabūn*)."

The word *rahba* ("fear") here is the opposite of *raghba* ("desire"), which means drawing close with affection, as opposed to *rahba*, just as fear stands in contrast to hope.

This verse relates to the phrase "*and to God prostrates...*". Some interpreters believe it connects to "*and We have sent down to you the Reminder*", while others think it ties to "*Have they not seen what God has created...?*", akin to the common expression "I fed her hay and cold water," implying "and I gave her cold water to drink." When viewed in its entirety, the verse could be interpreted as "Have they not seen what God has created and have they not heard what God said: 'Do not take two gods...'". However, the interpretation linking it to "*and to God prostrates...*" is considered more

fitting.

The phrase "Do not take two gods" aims to discourage the worship of multiple deities alongside *Allah*, not just limiting the count to two, but extending the prohibition to adopting any number of gods beyond one. This meaning is reinforced by the subsequent affirmation, "*Indeed, He is one God.*" The use of "two" as an adjective for "gods" and "one" for "God" in the verse serves to underline this crucial distinction, emphasizing the exclusivity of worshipping a singular God.

To put it more clearly, this verse emphasizes the prohibition of worshipping any entity besides God, regardless of whether it's one or multiple. Given that the polytheists' minimum belief in their gods involved at least two, and typically more, the verse uses the number two to illustrate the concept of polytheism. This choice effectively encompasses the prohibition of all forms of polytheism, no matter the number of gods involved.

It is possible that the specific mention of the number two could stem from a prevalent belief among polytheists. Typically, they acknowledged a god of creation and origination, viewed as the source of all other deities, and a distinct god of worship and governance, charged with overseeing and managing worldly affairs. This nuanced interpretation of the verse appears to align more closely with the phrases that follow, (reflecting this dualistic concept of divinity common in polytheistic traditions.)

Consequently, the verse conveys: "Refrain from acknowledging two divine entities, one as the creator and another as the governor and object of worship. Understand that there is solely one God, the creator and the manager, for all acts of governance are intrinsically linked to creation. In recognizing Me as the creator, you inherently acknowledge My authority as the administrator. Hence, worship (and reverence) are exclusively My due. Thus, direct your fear and worship solely towards Me."

This explanation sheds light on the significance of the phrase "so fear only Me" that follows the earlier statement, demonstrating a nuanced form of reasoning in the Qur'an. The arrangement in the Arabic verse, where the object "Me" precedes the verb "fear," underscores the call for an exclusive focus on God. This structure implies a profound shift in perspective for the audience, not just a reduction of their multitude of gods to a singular one. The Quraysh, in particular, were accustomed to worshiping idols, not God, rationalizing that true worship stems from understanding, which

they believed was unattainable with the Supreme God. Instead, they venerated esteemed beings in creation, like angels, and select jinn and humans, whom they credited with managing worldly matters. Their belief was that by worshiping these beings, they could secure blessings, assuming these entities held sway over earthly affairs.

The command "so fear only Me" essentially serves as an allegory for "worship Me alone". This application arises because the preceding context discusses the universal prostration of all beings, intrinsically linked to worship and the fear of the angels. As previously elaborated, the fear expressed by the angels stems from God's majestic presence, not from the dread of punishment. The underlying message here mirrors that sentiment, emphasizing worship and reverence towards God alone.

وَلَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ وَلَهُ الدِّينُ وَاصِبًا أَفَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾

(16:52) And to Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth, and to Him is the religion (*dīn*) perpetually (*wāṣiban*). Do you then fear other than God?

Al-Rāghib in his *Mufradāt* states: "The term *wāṣib* ("perpetual") means a chronic, incurable illness. The verb *waṣaba* means someone has fallen ill, and to call someone *wāṣib* means they are ill. In the verb form, it conveys the same meaning, as *in awṣabahu kadhā* means an event made the object of the verb sick, and *yatawaṣṣab* means to suffer pain. God says, For them is a lasting punishment (*adhāb wāṣib*) (37:9), and also, *to Him is the religion perpetually* (wāṣiban). Therefore, this verse is a threat to those who adopted two gods, and warns them of a severe, everlasting punishment.

"Religion" (*dīn*) in this verse means obedience, and *wāṣib* means permanently. It is the right of humanity that they should perpetually obey God in all circumstances, just as the angels were described as, *They do not disobey God in what He commands them and do what they are commanded*. The phrase *waṣaba waṣūban* means to become permanent, and *waṣaba al-dīn* means the religion became obligatory. A *wāṣib* desert is one that is so vast it seems endless."

Therefore, the present verse and the one following it argue for God's oneness in divinity, in the sense of rightful worship, stating that religion is solely for Him and no one else has the right to legislate religious laws or

be obeyed by people. Thus, this verse and the following are in response to the denial of polytheists, who denied this fact.

Hence, the statement, *And to Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth* underscores God's unparalleled Lordship, indicating that everything within the heavens and earth, in the most genuine sense of ownership, is God's domain. Every element of the known cosmos, encompassing all its characteristics and actions, comes into being through His essence, is brought into existence by Him, and is manifested through His revelation. This connection is so profound that it remains unbroken at any moment. In this manner, entities exist due to God, akin to how possessions exist in relation to their owner. They are indeed His possessions, immutable and non-transferable, much like how one inherently owns their senses, such as sight and hearing.

In matters of faith, God Almighty reigns supreme over the world. It's unfathomable to consider that God, as the world's true Owner, would permit another entity to independently govern and exert influence, thereby detaching the rightful Owner from His own creation. Being the Lord of the Worlds inherently demands reverence and submission, for the title 'Lord' signifies the ultimate Owner and Manager.

The clause, *...and to Him is the religion perpetually* signifies that religion eternally belongs to God. Given that God Almighty is the sovereign of the universe, with complete ownership and governance over all its aspects, it's essential that human conduct aligns with His directives, aimed at leading humanity to its ultimate prosperity. The framework and strategy He employs for human governance, referred to as 'religion' in the Qur'an, necessitates that He alone has the authority to institute and decree His laws. Therefore, He is the sole proprietor of religion, as He has declared, *and to Him is the religion perpetually*. It falls upon Him to legislate what promotes human well-being, as He asserts, *With Allah rests guidance to the straight path* (16:9).

Various interpretations have been proposed for the term '*dīn*' in this context. Some understand it as obedience, others view it as sovereignty, and there are those who consider it to mean recompense. Each interpretation is backed by its own reasoning, evident to those who reflect deeply. However, the most fitting interpretation, especially when considering the verse in the broader context of affirming God's singular sovereignty and

the establishment of religion through prophetic revelation, aligns with the explanation we have provided.

The phrase, *Do you then fear other than God?* is a rhetorical question, essentially negating the notion of fearing others. It appears to draw from the preceding statements, essentially questioning: Given these circumstances, do you still find yourselves revering or obeying anyone apart from God?

وَمَا بِكُم مِّن نِّعْمَةٍ فَمِنَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ إِذَا مَسَّكُمُ الضُّرُّ فَإِلَيْهِ تَجْأَرُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾

(16:53) And whatever blessing you have, it is from God. Then, when harm touches you, unto Him you cry for help (*taj'arūn*).

This verse further clarifies the unity of God in His Lordship, addressing and critiquing the polytheists for their beliefs and self-made laws. It sets the stage for the verses that follow, which continue to focus on this theme.

Here, 'harm' denotes distress or adversity, resulting from the lack of a beneficial blessing crucial for human well-being. The term *taj'arūn* is likened to the distress calls of wild animals. The expression *unto Him you cry for help* serves as a metaphorical depiction of prayer, supplication, and the act of seeking assistance, drawing a parallel with the instinctual cries of animals in distress.

The assertion, *And whatever blessing you have, it is from God* is a broad, well-supported statement, grounded in evidence rather than mere assertion. The rationale behind this claim has been laid out in earlier verses. Moreover, the audience of this message, whoever they may be, recognize this truth, as evidenced by their instinctual turn to God for supplication in times of distress. This natural inclination to seek assistance from the Cause of causes during periods of difficulty underscores a fundamental human trait.

The verse conveys that every blessing you enjoy is a testament to God's grace, a fact you're well aware of. In times of suffering, it's you who earnestly seek and call upon Him, directing your pleas and cries solely to Him, and not to others. If there were another sanctuary, even just once, you would naturally seek it, but you consistently do not, and will not. Thus, it is undeniably God who grants your blessings and alleviates your hardships. Given this, the question arises: why then do you not fully embrace

and adhere to worship and obedience to Him?

In moments of extreme adversity and insurmountable challenges, the act of reaching out to God Almighty through earnest prayers and pleas is a universally recognized necessity. This is true even for those who do not profess a belief in God; during such critical times, they often discover that their hope, rather than diminishing, is redirected towards something unseen. The very presence of hope implies it relies on a significant presence, indicating an entity worthy of that hope. Similarly, emotional states that involve a connection, such as love, hatred, intent, aversion, or desire, necessitate an external focal point. Without something external to direct these feelings towards, such emotions would have no basis for manifestation. This principle is applicable universally, underscoring the inherent dependency and interconnectedness of all beings that are capable of forming relationships.

Hence, the existence of hope and expectation within the human spirit amidst severe trials, even when all visible supports fail, is itself a testament to a prevailing cause beyond these broken links. This enduring cause remains untouched by life's upheavals and consistently connected to humanity, immune to vanishing, fading, or being forgotten.

This profound realization is ingrained in the human essence, although it may be overshadowed by external influences or the allure of the material world. Yet, in moments of deep crisis, when every conventional remedy fails and every avenue to relief vanishes, revealing a stark reality devoid of distractions, this intrinsic truth emerges unmistakably. In such moments of utter isolation, the human heart gravitates towards this enduring truth, recognizing it as the ultimate source, the cause beyond all causes – and that is God, the Exalted.

This fundamental truth resides within individuals, deeply rooted in their inherent nature, though it may be obscured by external influences or the allure of the material world. Yet, when an individual is engulfed by crises, finding themselves devoid of all conventional solutions and bereft of any path to relief, with every known cause and remedy eclipsed by overwhelming adversity, a stark clarity emerges. In this void, where nothing remains to distract or occupy the heart, the truth, previously veiled by external distractions and unrecognized by the individual, reveals itself vividly. In these moments of profound isolation, the heart instinctively

reaches out to this enduring truth, recognizing it as the paramount cause, the ultimate source of hope and solace—and that is God, the Exalted.

ثُمَّ إِذَا كَشَفَ الضُّرَّ عَنكُمْ إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِّنكُم بِرَبِّهِمْ يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾

(16:54) Then, when He removes the harm from you, behold, a group among you associates others with their Lord.

Here begins the reproach and rebuke of the polytheists, leading eventually to a threat of divine punishment, which they deserve. The removal of harm, through their cries for help and instinctive return to their Creator, should have led them to recognize Him as the only Lord. However, even after the reality of the matter was made clear to them through the alleviation of their troubles and the descent of mercy, a group among them still clung to external causes, returning to their former idolatry. The vices in their hearts were reawakened and strengthened, desires blinded them, and they once again associated others with God. One of the entities they associated as partners were these very external causes. The meaning of the verse is clear.

This marks the beginning of a reproach and rebuke of the polytheists, ultimately leading to a warning of deserved divine retribution. Ideally, the lifting of their distress, prompted by their instinctual pleas to their Creator, should have steered them towards acknowledging Him as the only Lord. Yet, despite the evident truth revealed through the relief of their hardships and the outpouring of divine mercy, some persisted in their old ways, reverting to idolatry. The re-emergence of vices in their hearts, the blinding force of desires, led them back to attributing divine qualities to other beings or things. The meaning of the verse is clear.[1]

لِيَكْفُرُواْ بِمَا آتَيْنَاهُمْ فَتَمَتَّعُواْ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾

(16:55) being unthankful (*li-yakfurū*) for what We have given them. So let them enjoy. Soon they shall know!

In this context, the *lām* at the beginning of the sentence is used to

1 The verse straightforwardly addresses this tendency to ascribe partners to God, particularly in the form of these very external entities they relied upon in times of distress. (Ed.)

indicate purpose. It implies that the polytheists' act of idolatry was aimed at denying the blessings bestowed by God and showing ingratitude for the relief provided from their adversities.

If the polytheists' idolatry is perceived as a means to deny divine blessings, it's because their sole aim seems to be disregarding the benevolence of God and neglecting gratitude towards Him. Their deep immersion in the material realm has entrenched a materialistic worldview in their hearts, leading them to attribute blessings to tangible causes, a belief firmly ingrained in their psyche. This conviction acts as a thick veil, obstructing their inherent recognition of the unity of their God in His lordship. Faced with any blessing, they recall only the immediate source, overlooking the Causer of causes, God Almighty. As a result, they find themselves beholden to these earthly sources, anxious over their potential loss, yet display no such submission, humility, or concern towards God. Hence, their actions seemingly reflect nothing but a persistent denial of God's favors and a refusal to offer Him due gratitude.

Therefore, the denial of the Almighty God is their general aim in every situation they find themselves in and in every action they undertake. If, after the revelation of harm and the lifting of their afflictions, they still practice polytheism, becoming devoted and submissive to other deities, it is to deny God's blessings. As their denial is persistent and they are obstinate against God, they provoke His wrath, despite His declaration: *If you are grateful, I will surely give you more; but if you are ungrateful, My punishment is indeed severe* (14:7). Hence, the address is shifted from the Prophet to them, who until now were referred to in the third-person only, and speaking directly to them, it is said: *So enjoy yourselves; soon you will know*.

Thus, rejecting the Almighty God stands as their overarching motive in every circumstance they encounter and every action they undertake. If they persist in their polytheistic practices, showing devotion and submission to other entities even after their hardships are alleviated, it's essentially an act of denying God's benevolence. Their steadfast denial and defiance against God invite His displeasure, contrary to His assurance: *If you are grateful, I will surely give you more; but if you are ungrateful, My punishment is indeed severe* (14:7). Consequently, the narrative shifts from discussing them in the third-person to addressing them directly (instead of the Prophet), making it clear with the statement: *So enjoy yourselves; soon you will know.*

The verse deliberately omits detailing what pleasures are to be enjoyed, thereby encapsulating all worldly indulgences. This omission suggests that whatever worldly attachments they foster, they will ultimately face accountability for them on the Day of Judgment, where none of these will offer them any benefit or reward. Similarly, the lack of specificity about what they will 'soon know' is intentional, leaving the exact nature of their impending punishment undisclosed. This obscurity ensures that the consequence, when it arrives, will be unexpected and unforeseen by the polytheists, intensifying the impact and severity of the warning.

Certain commentators interpret the *lām* in the phrase, *being unthankful* as the *lām* of command, implying a threat that denotes an element of improbability. Nonetheless, this interpretation seems somewhat convoluted.

وَيَجْعَلُونَ لِمَا لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ نَصِيبًا مِّمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ تَاللَّهِ لَتُسْأَلُنَّ عَمَّا كُنتُمْ تَفْتَرُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾

(16:56) To what they do not know (*mā lā yaʿlamūn*), they attribute a share of what We have provided them. By Allah, you will surely be questioned concerning what you used to fabricate.

Commentators note that this verse extends the list of the polytheists' sins highlighted in preceding verses. It suggests, "Beyond what has already been mentioned, the polytheists also engaged in the act of allocating a share to entities about which they had no true understanding."

In the phrase *mā lā yaʿlamūn*, the word *mā* is used in a relative sense, pertaining to the deities of the polytheists. The pronoun "they" denotes the polytheists themselves, and the direct object of "what they do not know" is implied rather than explicitly stated. The essence of the statement is: "The polytheists allocate a share of the provisions We have given them to their gods, oblivious to the fact that these gods possess neither the power to harm nor to benefit."

This assigning refers to the offerings they made to their idols. In Sūrah al-An'am, this is described as follows: *And they assign to God from what He has created of crops and livestock a share and say, "This is for God," by their claim, "and this is for our 'partners.'" But what is for their 'partners' does not reach God, and what is for God, it reaches their 'partners.' Evil is*

what they rule (6:136). This is the explanation given for the verse, but it is somewhat overwrought.

Another possible explanation is that this part follows directly from *associates others with their Lord*, implying: "Among you are those who attribute partners to their Lord and dedicate a portion of what We have bestowed upon them to entities they do not truly understand." In this context, "what they do not know" alludes to the superficial reasons they believe to have autonomous effects, despite lacking genuine understanding of these causes' nature and being unaware that these supposed causes cannot reliably inflict harm or offer benefit, as evidenced by occasions when they observe no effect from these causes.

This verse indicates that the polytheists credited parts of their sustenance to apparent causes, despite essentially viewing their provisions as independent of these causes, and not truly acknowledging God as the provider. This contradiction reveals that, deep down, they recognized God's role in their provision. This is evident from earlier verses mentioning their pleas to God during hardships. Acknowledging this, it seems they perceived these visible sources as co-contributors alongside God in providing sustenance, allocating a share of their provisions to these causes. Hence, following the reprimand and reproach directed at them, they are sternly warned with: *By Allah, you will surely be questioned concerning what you used to fabricate.*

وَيَجْعَلُونَ لِلَّهِ الْبَنَاتِ سُبْحَانَهُ وَلَهُم مَّا يَشْتَهُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾

(16:57) And they attribute to Allah daughters—exalted is He—and for themselves what they desire.

This passage reproaches the polytheists for their baseless and ill-informed choice, elevating their status while demeaning their Lord. They presumptuously assigned daughters to God, which they themselves regarded with disdain, preferring sons for themselves.

Therefore, the statement, *And they attribute to Allah daughters—exalted is He* signifies that the polytheists identified certain goddesses as divine females, proclaiming them as God's daughters. As noted by some commentators, tribes such as Khuzāʿah and Kinānah held the belief that angels were God's daughters.

In Brahmanical, Buddhist, and Sabian idolatry, many deities, consisting of angels and jinn, were worshiped, all of whom were believed to be female and considered to be the daughters of God. The Qur'an also mentions that they regarded angels, who are the servants of the Most Merciful, as female *And they made the angels, who are servants of the Most Merciful, females* (43:19), and it also says: *And they attribute between Him and the jinn a lineage* (37:158).

In the practices of Brahmanical, Buddhist, and Sabian idol worship, numerous deities, including angels and jinn, were worshiped, all presumed to be female and deemed as God's daughters. The Qur'an references this belief, noting that angels, servants of the Most Merciful, were considered female as stated in *And they made the angels, who are servants of the Most Merciful, females* (43:19), and also highlights, *And they attribute between Him and the jinn a lineage* (37:158), (indicating the perceived familial ties between God and the jinn.)

Imam Fakhr al-Rāzī provides insight into why polytheists viewed angels as female and dubbed them daughters of God: Polytheists likened angels to women because both are concealed from human sight. This analogy extended to their perception of the sun—*shams*—as feminine, attributing its hidden disk to the intensity of its light which obscures visibility, similar to how veiled women remain unseen. However, this rationale doesn't universally apply to all unseen entities. Thus, the fact that jinn, also invisible, are not regarded as feminine should not lead to confusion or contradiction in this context.

Others have rationalized the depiction of angels as female by noting their invisibility and intangibility, drawing parallels to daughters, who are often closely guarded and placed in secure, esteemed environments by men. Unlike angels, jinn, though also not visible, are concealed differently.

Yet, these two perspectives are speculative at best. A deeper look into the various forms of polytheism, as explored in other sections of this book, reveals that such beliefs were not unique to the Arabs. Instead, the concept of deifying female entities as divine daughters traces back to ancient polytheistic traditions in India, Egypt, Babylon, Greece, and Rome.

Delving into the core beliefs of idol worshippers, it's evident that they viewed angels as the source of all that's beneficial and jinn as the harbingers of all evil, venerating them as gods accordingly. They revered angels,

hoping for their benevolence, and dreaded jinn, fearing their evil. To the idolaters, these entities represented two fundamental forces in the universe: one active, the other passive. They interpreted the interaction between these forces as akin to marriage, designating the active force as the 'father' and the passive as the 'mother,' with their 'children' being the outcome of this union. These 'offspring' were then divided into sons and daughters, with some deities being referred to as mothers and daughters, and others as fathers and sons.

Therefore, if some Arab polytheists said that all angels are the daughters of God, they were merely imitating ancient polytheistic beliefs, a blind imitation without understanding those beliefs.

Regarding the phrase: *and for themselves what they desire*, it appears from the context that this phrase is connected to the phrase *And they attribute to Allah daughters*. The implied meaning is: "And they assign for themselves what they desire, meaning they assigned daughters to God, believing angels to be God's daughters, and for themselves, they desired sons. This is why they buried their daughters alive, preferring for God what they themselves disliked."

Some have said that the phrase *what they desire* is a postponed subject and "for themselves" is a preceding predicate. This phrase is linked to the act of assigning, and according to this explanation, the statement is meant to mock or suppress.

They then explain that it is not appropriate for the phrase *And for them is what they desire* to be linked to *And they attribute to Allah daughters* because it goes against the rules of grammar. The rule is that a transitive verb, whether inherently transitive or made transitive by a preposition, never takes its connected subject pronoun as its object—neither directly nor with a preposition—unless something intervenes. For example, if Zayd hits himself, one does not say "Zayd hit him", or "You hit you." Equally, one does not say when Zayd is angry with himself "Zayd became angry with him" or "You became angry with you." However, one can use it when the verb is doubly transitive, for example: "Zayd thought he was strong."

Therefore, if the phrase *And for them is what they desire* is connected to *And they attribute to Allah daughters*, it should have been said: "And they assign to God the daughters, exalted is He, and for themselves what they desire." Since it is not phrased this way, it must be concluded that the

second phrase is connected to the act of assigning, and as mentioned, the phrase "what they desire" is a subject that comes after its predicate, and the word for them is a predicate mentioned earlier. The implied meaning of the statement is: "And they assign to God daughters—exalted is He—and what they desire for themselves—they designated daughters for God and whatever they wished for themselves."

However, the truth of the matter is that this rule only needs to be followed where its absence would lead to confusion for the reader or listener, and that the insertion of a preposition between the two pronouns serves as a separation, as in the verse: *And shake toward yourself the trunk of the palm tree* (19:25), and also: *and keep your arms drawn in awe to your sides* (28:32). Some commentators have outright rejected this rule and have argued against it appearing in these two verses. They have provided other responses to the mentioned commentator's statement, which are not mentioned here as they are not necessary. Readers can refer to detailed commentaries for more information.

وَإِذَا بُشِّرَ أَحَدُهُمْ بِالأُنثَى ظَلَّ وَجْهُهُ مُسْوَدًّا وَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ ﴿٥٨﴾

(16:58) And when one of them is given tidings of a female, his face becomes darkened, and he is filled with suppressed rage (*kaẓīm*).

The darkening of a person's face and of their countenance means becoming angry. *Kaẓīm* refers to someone who suppresses their sorrow and anger. The sentence under discussion is adverbial, meaning that when they attributed daughters to God, they did so at the same time as, if someone was informed that his wife had given birth to a daughter, his face would turn dark with anger, and he would suppress his anger.

يَتَوَارَى مِنَ الْقَوْمِ مِن سُوءِ مَا بُشِّرَ بِهِ أَيُمْسِكُهُ عَلَى هُونٍ أَمْ يَدُسُّهُ فِي التُّرَابِ أَلاَ سَاء مَا يَحْكُمُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾

(16:59) He hides (*yatawārā*) from the people out of distress at the news he has been brought: shall he retain it in humiliation (*huwan*), or bury it (*yadussu-hu*) in the ground! Look! Evil is the judgment that they make.

Tawārā means to turn away or to hide, derived from the root *warā*,

and the word *huwan* signifies humiliation and degradation, while *dass* means to conceal or hide.

The verse illustrates that upon hearing the news of a daughter's birth, idolaters would react with intense displeasure, their faces darkening with rage, as they grappled with the societal stigma attached to this event. Faced with the choice of accepting the perceived dishonor of raising a daughter or resorting to the heinous practice of infanticide, they often chose the latter, a custom deeply ingrained in their society. Prior to childbirth, they would prepare a pit, and upon discovering the newborn was female, they would cruelly dispose of her in the pit, covering it to seal her fate. This barbaric action stemmed from fears of financial hardship and the concern that their daughters, in times of poverty, might attract the attention of those deemed unworthy, compelling them to commit such atrocities.

The abhorrent tradition of burying daughters alive began after a conflict between the Banī Tamīm tribe and the Persian King, during which many women from the tribe were captured by the Persian forces and taken as slaves. When a truce was eventually reached, the Banī Tamīm demanded the return of their captives. The Persian authorities offered the women a choice to either return to their tribe or remain at the court. Several daughters chose to stay, which deeply infuriated the men of Banī Tamīm. In response, they resolved to bury any future daughters alive, initiating this gruesome practice. This method was subsequently adopted by other tribes, leading to the widespread acceptance of infanticide as a customary practice.

The judgment referred to in the phrase, *Evil is the judgment that they make* critiques the assertion: "Daughters are for God, and sons are for us." This critique doesn't imply they genuinely valued sons over daughters; instead, it highlights their mindset that anything undesirable was attributed to God, while what they favored remained theirs.

Some commentators interpret this judgment as the perceived duty to kill their daughters, believing that raising daughters would bring shame and dishonor. Nevertheless, the initial interpretation is more consistent with the subsequent verse.

لِلَّذِينَ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالآخِرَةِ مَثَلُ السَّوْءِ وَلِلَّهِ الْمَثَلُ الأَعْلَى وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٦٠﴾

(16:60) For those who do not believe in the Hereafter is the description of evil (*mathal al-sūʾ*), and for God is the highest description, and He is the Almighty, the Wise.

Mathal means description, and if famous proverbs are called *mathal*s, it is because they are descriptions that circulate in languages, appearing in appropriate and similar contexts.

The term *sūʾ* translates to "evil," and its combination with *mathal* broadens the scope of description, highlighting that characteristics can be categorized based on their nature: either positive or negative. This dichotomy gives rise to two types of examples: positive examples (*mathal ḥasan*) and negative examples (*mathal sūʾ*). These traits can stem from inherent qualities, such as beauty or ugliness, over which an individual has no control, or from one's deliberate actions, exemplified by the virtues of fairness and the flaws of unfairness. Human judgment reserves praise or criticism for those qualities within our control, disregarding innate characteristics. Praise, then, is directed towards actions deemed virtuous by human nature, encouraging behaviors that lead to happiness, while criticism targets the omission of such actions. This distinction between good and evil is fundamental to true religion. It becomes clear that only the anticipation of severe punishment and the assurance of being held accountable deter individuals from wrongdoing. Mere disapproval proves ineffective as a deterrent, as societal norms evolve, making once-condemned acts acceptable, thereby stripping them of their perceived negativity.

This passage highlights that the core factor preventing individuals from engaging in reprehensible actions is the firm belief in the Afterlife, coupled with the certainty of facing accountability and its consequences. Such a conviction safeguards against dishonor and ignominy, serving as the fundamental force that corrects and gives meaning to human behavior. It is this belief that guides individuals towards the pursuit of happiness, exerting an influence unmatched by any other principle, including monotheism (*tawḥīd*), despite its status as the pinnacle of knowledge.

The saying of the Almighty God points to this matter, stating: *And do not follow desire, lest it divert you from the way of God. Indeed, those who stray from the way of God will have a severe punishment because they forgot the Day of Reckoning* (38:26).

According to this verse, disbelief in the Afterlife and the underestimation

of accountability and divine retribution stand at the core of all sinful behavior and its underlying causes. In contrast, belief in the Afterlife is the foundation of all virtuous acts and the wellspring of all blessings and moral excellence. Consequently, every negative attribute and dishonor experienced by a person can be traced back to neglecting the reality of the Afterlife, while every positive quality and praiseworthy behavior one exhibits is rooted in the mindfulness of the Afterlife.

In light of the discussed context, the nuanced meaning behind the phrase "For those who do not believe in the Hereafter is the description of evil" becomes evident. While earlier verses categorize them as polytheists, the focus shifts to their disbelief in the Hereafter when addressing the nature of their evil.

Hence, individuals who reject the concept of an Afterlife embody the essence of all negative characteristics and actions, as their fundamental flaw lies in the rejection of the Afterlife itself. This disbelief is the benchmark of their inherent negativity. Should believers in the Afterlife occasionally exhibit undesirable behaviors, it is attributed to a momentary lapse in remembering the Day of Judgment, a lapse for which the disbelief in the Afterlife is ultimately responsible.

The discussion so far has focused on negative traits that are universally recognized and condemned by reason. However, there are also negative aspects which, although not condemned by reason, are nonetheless viewed negatively by society. These include being female—a notion held by some—having daughters, experiencing financial hardship, sickness, death, annihilation, incapability, and ignorance. Such traits are not unique to believers or non-believers but are universally encountered. Additionally, characteristics derived from rational thought, like need, poverty, lack, non-being, and potentiality, are not limited to humans but apply to all entities capable of being conceived. In this context, non-believers are associated with all forms of negative traits and conditions. Some of these negative aspects are unique to them, others are shared with believers, and yet others are universal, affecting all entities, as previously explained.

God the Exalted transcends all negative traits and examples previously discussed. These adverse examples arise from actions deemed sinful and objectionable by reason, all of which fall under the broad category of injustice. The divine nature of God is such that He does not commit injustice, as

He Himself declares: *Your Lord does not wrong anyone* (18:49) and further affirms: *And He is the Wise, the All-Knowing* (43:84). (This clarity underscores God's absolute purity from any form of injustice, highlighting His supreme wisdom and omniscience.)

Therefore, every judgment He makes and every action He takes is determined by wisdom and the prevailing order he instituted in the universe, such that nothing else could take its place.

Regarding those negative traits previously discussed—those not found objectionable by reason but naturally disliked, as well as those identified as immoral through rational thought—God is supremely transcendent above them. This is due to God the Almighty embodying absolute perfection, with His realm being devoid of any flaws. He is the Omnipotent, with unrivaled power, making any form of weakness incompatible with His nature. Omniscience belongs to Him, leaving no room for ignorance. He embodies pure life, rendering death and the prospect of non-existence irrelevant to Him. Free from any form of deficiency and non-being, the limitations and vulnerabilities typical of physical existence cannot be ascribed to Him. The Qur'anic affirmations of these truths are both abundant and unequivocal, obviating the need for their detailed enumeration here.

Hence, God stands supremely apart from all negative traits that define creation, embodying sanctity and purity beyond comparison. Yet, this transcendence extends even to the virtues and commendable qualities as perceived in others. Attributes such as life, knowledge, power, nobility, greatness, and majesty, as they manifest in created beings, do not align with their divine counterparts in God the Almighty. While these qualities in creatures are limited and marred by flaws, dependency, and imperfection, in God, they exist in a state of flawless and boundless perfection, untainted by any form of deficiency or non-existence. Thus, God's existence is characterized by an eternal life untouched by death, an omnipotence free from weakness or weariness, an omniscience unblemished by ignorance, and a majesty devoid of any disgrace.

At this juncture, the profound meaning behind God the Exalted's declarations about Himself becomes evident. When He states: *His is the loftiest description in the heavens and the earth* (30:27) and *to Him belong the Best Names* (20:8), what are we to understand? This indicates that while qualities can vary in their level of virtue, ranging from lesser to greater and

beyond, the supreme epitome of excellence is uniquely attributed to God Almighty. Similarly, names encompass both positive and negative connotations, with the positive ones varying in their degrees of virtue. The pinnacle of these virtues, the most exalted, is reserved solely for God the Almighty.

Through the clarification provided, we come to grasp the essence of God's supreme exemplar. The phrase, *and for God is the highest description* is intended to ascribe the utmost level of excellence uniquely to God the Almighty. It signifies that within the realm of examples, it is not the negative but the positive ones that pertain to God, and among these positive examples, the absolute highest is reserved exclusively for God the Exalted.

This elucidation further clarifies that the supreme exemplar, uniquely attributed to God the Almighty as previously discussed, involves negating any negative qualities from Him, as He Himself has stated: *There is nothing like unto Him* (42:11). This negation extends to the absence of limitations and flaws within His affirmed noble attributes. The declaration, *And He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise* reinforces and elucidates this concept, signifying that all forms of honor exclusively belong to Him, untouched by any form of disgrace. This stems from the understanding that disgrace merely represents a lack of honor, and an entity embodying complete honor cannot be imagined as deficient in it. Furthermore, all forms of wisdom are His, precluding any association with ignorance, for ignorance is simply the lack of wisdom, and it has been established that He is devoid of any deficiency in wisdom.

Given that neither disgrace nor ignorance can exist within His divine realm, God is inherently free from any traits of inadequacy, any qualities warranting censure or disapproval, or any instances of negativity. In contrast, the essence of a disbeliever is marked by disgrace and ignorance. As such, traits of deficiency are fundamental to their nature, positioning the disbeliever as a manifestation of negativity.

Contrary to the disbeliever, the believer, despite their inherent deficiencies and ignorance, is safeguarded under God's protection. God has bestowed upon them His honor and guided them out of ignorance with His spirit, as evidenced by His words: *And God is the ally of the believers* (3:68), *And for God is the honor, and for His Messenger, and for the believers* (63:8), and *Those are the ones whom God has written faith in their hearts and strengthened them with a spirit from Him* (58:22).

وَلَوْ يُؤَاخِذُ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ بِظُلْمِهِم مَّا تَرَكَ عَلَيْهَا مِن دَابَّةٍ وَلَـٰكِن يُؤَخِّرُهُمْ
إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَجَلُهُمْ لاَ يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ سَاعَةً وَلاَ يَسْتَقْدِمُونَ﴿٦١﴾

(16:61) Were Allah to take mankind to task for their wrongdoing, He would not leave any creature (*dābba*) upon it. But He respites them until a specified time; so when their time comes they shall not defer it by a single hour nor shall they advance it.

The pronoun "it" refers to the earth, a detail implicitly understood through the mention of "mankind," making an explicit reference to "on the earth" unnecessary.

It's a plausible explanation that, within this context, *dābba* specifically denotes humans, given that humans are indeed moving creatures. Therefore, the verse conveys the notion: "Should God choose to exact punishment on people for their injustices—to the extent that every perpetrator of injustice is penalized—then no human being would be left walking the earth. This scenario would unfold as wrongdoers would be eradicated due to their injustices, and the virtuous, including prophets and impeccable saints, would never come into existence, as their forebears would have been annihilated."

Nevertheless, commentators, acknowledging the broad scope of the term *dābba*, interpret it to encompass all living beings, both humans and animals. From their perspective, the verse suggests: "Should God decide to penalize the oppressors for their wrongdoings, He would annihilate all human beings along with animals." This interpretation raises the question of why animals, innocent of any wrongdoing, should suffer destruction due to human injustice, suggesting that their demise would be a collateral consequence of the injustice of humans.

A compelling response to this objection, as refined from suggestions by some scholars, posits that the eradication of one generation of humans precludes the birth of subsequent generations, including prophets. The extinction of humanity from the earth would inevitably lead to the demise of other species as well, given that their existence is intertwined with human survival and welfare. This concept is supported by the verse: *He created for you all that is on the earth* (2:29), (indicating that other creatures' existence serves human needs and purposes.)

Certainly, alternative interpretations have been suggested to address the critique concerning the broad application of the term "creature" in the verse. However, these interpretations do not substantially enhance the understanding, so for a deeper analysis, readers are encouraged to consult detailed commentaries. We will not elaborate on these alternatives further in this discussion.

Some commentators have utilized this verse to contend that prophets are fallible, interpreting the text's implication that if God were to annihilate humans for their injustices, no one would survive on earth, as suggesting that prophets too commit injustices. However, this interpretation misreads the verse's intent. The verse simply states that should God decide to obliterate humanity for its injustices, the entire human race would face extinction. This does not infer that every individual would be punished for their personal wrongdoing. It's plausible that the majority might be eradicated due to their own injustices, while a minority could be lost in the fallout of their community's destruction. Thus, the verse does not suggest that every person, including prophets and those deemed infallible, is guilty of injustice.

In response, it has been argued that the term "mankind" in the verse specifically targets the oppressors within humanity, as indicated by the phrase "for their wrongdoing." Therefore, this does not encompass the Infallibles in any way.

Others might respond that "wrongdoing" here is broader including any form of disobedience, defined as actions that diverge from the directives of the Almighty. This explanation could extend to actions that are less preferable, contrary to advisory commands, and might apply to prophets as well. This perspective is supported by the instance of Adam and his wife, who acknowledged, *Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves* (7:23). Similar errors are attributed to other prophets, leading to the adage, "The good deeds of the righteous are considered faults for those who are close to God" (*ḥasanāt al-abrār sayyi'āt al-muqarrabīn*). This suggests that actions deemed virtuous for the righteous may be viewed as shortcomings for those nearer to God. Thus, the usage of 'injustice' in the verse being discussed doesn't necessarily classify prophets as sinners, in the sense of committing acts of disobedience against God's commands.

Another group of commentators suggests that the total annihilation

mentioned could be exemplified by an act such as God withholding rain. In such a scenario, it's clear that both the righteous and the wicked would suffer alike, illustrating the principle that when divine retribution is meted out, it doesn't distinguish between the virtuous and the sinful—much like "fire consumes both the wet and the dry." Yet, this form of punishment represents a tribulation and hardship for God's adversaries, whereas for the faithful, it serves as a trial and an opportunity to augment their divine reward.

However, each of these three explanations presents its own set of limitations.

The first explanation is problematic because if "mankind" is interpreted to exclusively denote oppressors, logically, only they would face destruction, as some interpretations have indeed suggested. This then raises the question of why the infallibles would be subject to destruction. Furthermore, this interpretation does not account for why other creatures would also be destroyed, leaving the assertion that no creature would remain on earth unaddressed.

The second explanation does not hold up well because the verses in question specifically address injustice in the form of polytheism and violations of God's commands. Expanding the definition of 'injustice' to include actions that are less preferable introduces an interpretation that seems disconnected from the verse's immediate context. This is particularly evident in the phrase, *But He respites them until a specified time*, which suggests a looming threat and is incongruous with a broader understanding of "injustice."

Regarding the third explanation, it lacks direct support from the text itself. The idea that divine punishment, like withholding rain, affects both the righteous and the wicked alike, serving as a calamity for the former and a test for the latter, is not explicitly grounded in the verse's wording.

But He respites them until a specified time; so when their time comes they shall not defer it by a single hour nor shall they advance it—This verse presents evidence for a contingent matter, with the initial conditional clause suggesting this context. It implies that their reckoning is not rushed but is deferred to an appointed time or a predetermined duration. This appointed time is understood differently for individuals, communities, and humanity at large: for individuals, it is their demise; for communities,

their extinction; and for all humanity, the sounding of the trumpet signaling the Day of Resurrection. The Qur'an addresses these meanings of the appointed time in various verses. For instance, it states: *though there are some of you who die earlier—and that you may complete a specified term* (40:67), and elsewhere: *And for every nation is a term; when their term comes, they cannot delay it an hour nor can they advance it* (7:34), and in another verse: *And if it were not for a word that went forth from your Lord, judgment would have been rendered between them at once, and those who have wronged would not have been given respite* (42:14).

وَيَجْعَلُونَ لِلَّهِ مَا يَكْرَهُونَ وَتَصِفُ أَلْسِنَتُهُمُ الْكَذِبَ أَنَّ لَهُمُ الْحُسْنَىٰ لَا جَرَمَ أَنَّ لَهُمُ النَّارَ وَأَنَّهُم مُّفْرَطُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾

(16:62) They attribute to Allah what they dislike, and their tongues assert the lie that the best reward will be theirs. Undoubtedly, the Fire shall be their lot and they will be foremost.

This verse revisits the matter of polytheists assigning daughters to God the Almighty while preferring sons for themselves. It explains: Their act of attributing daughters to God stemmed from their aversion to having daughters themselves, whereas they attributed sons to themselves due to their preference and affection for having sons.

Therefore, the statement, *They attribute to Allah what they dislike* is specifically about daughters. The following part, *and their tongues assert the lie*, implies they are spreading falsehoods with their claim that the best rewards await them, implying that those who have sons will receive favorable outcomes. Some interpret "the best reward" as referring to Paradise, under the assumption of the resurrection and the Day of Judgment being real and the prophets' words being truthful. This notion aligns with the sentiment in the verse: *And if We let him taste mercy from Us after some adversity has touched him, he will surely say, "This is due to me, and I do not think the Hour will occur; and if I am returned to my Lord, indeed, for me there will be with Him the best"* (42:50). This interpretation would hold merit if not for the concluding remarks of the next verse, which we will explore further.

***Undoubtedly, the Fire shall be their lot and they will be foremost* (mufraṭūn)**—This indicates that their fate is sealed to enter the Fire. The

term *mufraṭ* suggests someone who advances or leads; similarly, *ifrāṭ* implies an excess in hastening, whereas *tafrīṭ* represents a lack thereof. The word *faraṭ* describes a person who moves ahead of a group to arrange necessities like water and shelter. The expression "he sent him ahead" conveys the action of sending someone forward in advance.

The fabrication and their erroneous belief that they can assign to God what is undesirable to them, while securing for themselves what they covet, essentially amounts to presuming they can precede or outpace God Almighty. In response, God clarifies the falsehood of their assumption and the consequence of their deceit, which is the inevitable descent into the Fire. This is encapsulated in the declaration: *Undoubtedly, the Fire shall be their lot...*

تَاللَّهِ لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمَمٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ فَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فَهُوَ وَلِيُّهُمُ الْيَوْمَ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٦٣﴾

(16:63) By Allah, indeed We sent to nations before you, but Satan made their deeds attractive to them. So he is their ally today, and they will have painful punishment

The context suggests that "today" refers to the day of this verse's revelation, and "Satan being their ally" means their collective adherence to misguidance during the time of revelation. The "promised punishment" is understood to be the punishment of the Day of Judgment, as is apparent in most verses that mention punishment.

The meaning is as follows: "By God, indeed We dispatched Our messengers to nations before you, such as the Jews, Christians, and Magians, and to those not yet extinct like the people of ʻAd and Thamud. Satan made their deeds appear attractive to them, leading them to follow him and turn away from Our messengers. Thus, he is their guardian today, and they are united in misguidance. And for them, on the Day of Judgment, is a painful punishment."

Al-Zamakhsharī, based on this reading, has suggested that the pronoun in "their ally" refers to the Quraysh, and the meaning is that Satan adorned the evil deeds of past nations and is today the guardian and protector of the Quraysh. However, the difference in pronouns weakens this possibility.

It is also possible that "nations" refers to extinct past nations, and then

the guardianship and leadership of Satan for those nations would be in the realm of *Barzakh* (the intermediary state after death), where they suffer painful punishment.

Some have said that "today" refers to the entire period of worldly life, and this period is the time of Satan's guardianship, while the Day of Judgment is the day of punishment.

Others have said that "today" refers to the Day of Judgment, where Satan will have guardianship over them, and it is there that they will have painful punishment. Still, others have said that "today" refers to the day when Satan adorns their deeds, and this expression is a narrative of the past.

However, the first reading seems most appropriate, followed by the second and then the third.

وَمَا أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ إِلاَّ لِتُبَيِّنَ لَهُمُ الَّذِى اخْتَلَفُواْ فِيهِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ﴿٦٤﴾

(16:64) We did not send down the Book to you except that you may clarify for them what they differ about, and as a guidance and mercy for a people who have faith.

The pronoun "for them" refers to the polytheists, specifically addressing their disputes over true faith and righteous deeds. The aim of this clarification is to conclusively present the truth, effectively completing the argument against them. This reading is supported by the distinction made between the matters of the believers and those of the polytheists, with the believers being mentioned separately as recipients of guidance and mercy, as it is said: *and as a guidance and mercy for a people who have faith.*

Thus, the essence of the verse is: "The revelation given to you was meant to shed light on the disputes concerning true knowledge and divine commandments. Its purpose was not only to finalize the argument against the disputants but also to act as a beacon of guidance and a blessing of mercy for the believers. Through this revelation, God has laid out His final argument to the disputants, while simultaneously guiding the believers towards the truth and enveloping them in His mercy, as they embrace and follow this truth."

Examining Narrations

There are a number of narrations which explain the phrase "people of the Reminder" (*ahl al-dhikr*) in the verse: *So ask the people of the reminder if you do not know* has been explained as referring to the Prophet's Household.

(1) In *al-Kāfī*, al-Kulaynī narrates via his chain of narrators from ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Kathīr, it is narrated that he said to Imam al-Ṣādiq, "What is meant by the verse, *So ask the people of the reminder if you do not know*?" He replied, "The reminder is Muḥammad, and we are his people, from whom they should ask..."

Author's comment: This narration refers to the verse: *Indeed, God has sent down to you a reminder, a messenger* (65:11), and there are many narrations regarding its meaning.

(2) In *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, from al-Barqī, and he with his chain from Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Abī al-Daylamī from Abī ʿAbd Allāh, it is narrated that he was asked, "What is meant by the verse, *So ask the people of the reminder if you do not know*?" He replied, "The reminder is the Qur'an, and the family of Muḥammad are the people of the reminder, whom God has commanded people to ask." It is evident that God never commands people to ask the ignorant, and He Himself has called the Qur'an the reminder and said: (*We have sent down the reminder to you so that you may clarify for the people that which has been sent down to them, so that they may reflect* (16:44) and also said: *Indeed it is a reminder for you and for your people, and soon you will be questioned* (43:44).

Author's comment: The Imam's argument is to establish that the Prophet's Household are the people of the reminder, and that the reminder is the Qur'an, and its people are they, as they are the community of the messenger of God. The two verses he quoted at the end of his speech are for corroborating this meaning, as has been explicitly stated in other narrations and there are other narrations regarding this meaning as well.

(3) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, from Muḥammad b. Muslim from Imam al-Bāqir, it is narrated that he said: "I asked the Imam about the people who are with us, they think that the people of the reminder in the verse, *So ask the people of the reminder...* are the Jews and Christians. The Imam replied: 'If they are the ones, they would call you to their religion and would never tell you the truth, which is

the validity of Islam.' Then he pointed to his chest and said: 'We are the people of the reminder, and we are the ones from whom people should ask.' Then he added: 'The reminder is the Qur'an.'"

Author's comment: A similar explanation has been narrated from Imam al-Riḍā in the assembly of the 'Abbāsid Caliph al-Ma'mūn.

As previously mentioned, the address in the verse, as the context suggests, is to the polytheists, the idolaters who were plotting against the prophethood of the Messenger of God. They were commanded to ask the "people of the Reminder," who are the People of the Book, specifically the Jews, whether God has sent any human messenger to whom He revealed His word. It is evident that since the polytheists did not accept the Prophet himself, it would be meaningless for the Qur'an to tell them to ask the people of the Reminder, as they did not even accept the Qur'an, let alone its people. Thus, we must conclude that the people of the Reminder in the specific context of the verse refers to the People of the Book, especially the Jews.

However, if we disregard the specific context of the verse and take it on its own, then it invokes a general rule that the ignorant, the respondent, and the subject of the response are all general. Any ignorant person who does not know something should ask someone knowledgeable about it. Therefore, "if you do not know" encompasses all true knowledge, and it is addressed to anyone who might not know something about the knowledge, and the one they are commanded to ask are anyone who is knowledgeable about it. And the epitome of the kind of knowledge with which this verse is concerned is the Household of the Messenger of God. Because if "the Reminder" refers to the Messenger of God, as in the verse of Sūrah al-Ṭalāq, then surely "the people of the Reminder" will be his family. And if "the Reminder" refers to the noble Qur'an, as in the verse of Sūrah al-Zukhruf, then in that case, the Qur'an is the remembrance of the Messenger of God and his people—the infallible Imams or the righteous from his people—and he and his people are "the people of the Reminder." They are the ones whom people are commanded to ask, and the Messenger of God also paired them with the Qur'an in the Tradition of Thaqalayn and commanded people to hold onto both, saying: "They will never separate until they return to me at the Pool..."

One piece of evidence that the words of the Imams in explaining "the

people of the Reminder" as the Prophet's Household, disregarding the specific context of the verse, is that in the narrations, there is no mention of the specific context.

From the above, the invalidity of some objections raised against the aforementioned narrations becomes clear.

One objection is that if "the Reminder" refers to the Messenger of God and "the People of the Reminder" refers to his family, the polytheists did not accept the Prophet to say anything about his family. And in *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is stated that Ibn Mardawayh narrated from Jābir that he said: "The Messenger of God said: 'It is not appropriate for a scholar to seal his knowledge with silence, nor is it appropriate for the ignorant to remain silent and not ask the knowledgeable, for God Almighty has said: *So ask the people of the Reminder if you do not know*, so it is incumbent upon every believer to know whether the action he is performing is guided or against guidance.'"

(4) In *Tafsīr Al-Qummī*, concerning the verse, (*Did those who plotted evil deeds then feel secure ... unexpectedly* (16:45), it is narrated from the Imam: "When they go for earning and trade, suddenly the punishment seizes them in that state and regarding *Or that He might seize them during their movements*, he said it means He seizes them while they are awake."

(5) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī* from Samāʿah from Imam al-Ṣādiq, it is narrated that he said: "I asked about the meaning of *wāṣib* in the phrase, *and to Him is the religion perpetually* (wāṣiban), and he replied: 'It means necessarily.'"

(6) And in *Maʿānī al-Akhbār* with his chain from Ḥannān b. Sudayr from Imam al-Ṣādiq, it is narrated that in the context of a tradition, he said: *and for God is the highest description* means a description that is without parallel, indescribable, and beyond imagination.

(7) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is stated that Ibn Mardawayh narrated from Abū Hurayrah that the Messenger of God said in the interpretation of the verse, *Were Allah to take mankind to task for their wrongdoing* (16:61): "If God holds me and Jesus son of Mary accountable for our sins"—and in another narration, it is stated as "me and Jesus son of Mary for the crime committed by this thumb and the finger next to it"—"He would indeed punish

us and would not be unjust to us."

Author's comment: This tradition contradicts the Book of God and the Sunnah of the Messenger, both of which affirm the infallibility of the prophets, and there is no way to interpret this tradition as referring to the omission of a preferable action, as such omission does not incur punishment.

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Verses 65-77

This section of the chapter once again returns to enumerating God's blessings and deriving monotheism and resurrection from His signs, and reference to the matter of legislation, which concerns prophethood.

وَاللَّهُ أَنزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاء مَاء فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَسْمَعُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾

(16:65) Allah sends down water from the sky with which He revives the earth after its death. There is indeed a sign in that for a people who listen.

The purpose of the verse is to call attention to the rejuvenation and greening of the earth after its dormancy and decay in winter. This occurs after the arrival of spring and the spring rains, when the roots and seeds of plants, after a period of dormancy, begin to grow and develop. This itself is a form of life, and although it is a weaker stage compared to animal life, it is still life. Modern scientific findings have also established that plants are composed of life germs, the same germs that exist in animals, although their form and effect are different.

There is indeed a sign in that for a people who listen—'listening' here means accepting the words that should be accepted. A rational person, who seeks truth, when hearing something that might be true, listens attentively and retains it. As the Qur'an says: *Those who listen to the word and follow the best of it; those are the ones whom God has guided, and those are people of understanding* (39:18).

So, for someone who is receptive to accepting the truth, the account of sending rain and reviving the earth after its death serves as a sign and evidence for the matter of resurrection on the Day of Judgment, understanding that He who revives the dead earth can also revive the dead.

وَإِنَّ لَكُمْ فِي الأَنْعَامِ لَعِبْرَةً نُّسْقِيكُم مِّمَّا فِي بُطُونِهِ مِن بَيْنِ فَرْثٍ وَدَمٍ لَّبَنًا خَالِصًا سَائِغًا لِلشَّارِبِينَ ﴿٦٦﴾

(16:66) There is indeed a moral for you in the cattle: We give you to drink of that which is in their bellies from between waste and blood, as pure milk, pleasant (*sā'ighan*) to those who drink.

The term "waste" refers to the waste that accumulates in the intestines and is collected in the large intestine but is called "dung" when expelled. The term *sā'igh* is an active participle of *sawgh*, which is said when food and drink flow smoothly. It is used when a drinkable liquid is pleasant and goes down the throat easily.

There is indeed a moral for you in the cattle—meaning, in camels, cows, and sheep, there is something that, if you are receptive to learning and heeding, suffices for your admonition and instruction. Then the verse explains this matter, saying: *We give you to drink of that which is in their bellies* ... Here, the pronoun referring to the cattle is singular, which is a case of considering the plural as singular.

From between waste and blood—The milk of animals, which is located near the end of the abdomen, between the legs, and blood, which flows through arteries and veins enveloping both. If milk is described as something situated between bodily waste and blood, it is because these three elements are internally close to each other. This pure and delicious food, milk, is extracted from between the two. As if one would say, "I chose Zayd from among the people and pulled him out," implying that Zayd and the group were together, even if Zayd was at the edge and not in the center of the group. The idea is to distinguish and separate one from the many.

The verse conveys that from within the cattle's innards, we are provided with milk, which, remarkably, is produced amidst dung and blood yet remains untainted by both, devoid of their flavor or odor. This milk offers a pleasant drink to its drinkers, standing as a testament for those who reflect upon it. It signifies the vastness of God's might and the scope of His intent. The One who ensures milk's purity amidst impurities surely possesses the power to revive humans, regardless of whether their bones have withered or their components have dispersed across the soil.

وَمِن ثَمَرَاتِ النَّخِيلِ وَالأَعْنَابِ تَتَّخِذُونَ مِنْهُ سَكَرًا وَرِزْقًا حَسَنًا إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾

(16:67) And of the fruits of date palms and vines, from which

you draw intoxication (*sukr*) and goodly provision. There are indeed signs in that for a people who apply reason.

Al-Rāghib in *al-Mufradāt* says *sukr* is the state that affects a person and their intellect, creating a barrier between the person and their intellect. *Sakar* is anything that intoxicates a person.

In *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, al-Ṭabrisī says that *sukr* comes in four forms:

(1) Any drink that causes intoxication.

(2) Any food that is tasty. This is based on the poet's saying: "You made fault-finding of the generous an intoxication (*sukr*)."

(3) Tranquility or calmness, leading to the saying "A tranquil night" (*laylah sākirah*). This is exemplified in the poet's line: "Neither free nor tranquil" (*wa laysat bi ṭalaq wa lā sākirah*) and in the phrase "The wind calmed down" (*sakarat al-rīḥ*). Another verse says, "And made the eyes of the free men tranquil" (*jaʿalat ʿayn al-ḥurūr tusir*).

(4) The fourth usage of *sukr* is as a verbal noun from the verb *sakira*, meaning to become intoxicated or confused. This is used in the phrase "Our vision became blurred (*sakirat absaruna*)."

The apparent original meaning of *sukr* is the loss of good sense or consciousness due to the use of substances that induce this state. The other meanings mentioned are derived from this primary sense through forms of metaphor and extension.

The phrase *and of the fruits of date palms and vines ...* is either a nominal sentence attached to, *Allah sends down water from the sky ...*, like the previous verse, *There is indeed a moral for you in the cattle ...*which suggests the meaning of: "God gave you from the fruits of the date palms and grapes", followed by the statement: *you take from it intoxication and good provision*.

It is said that the Arabs often leave the relative pronoun *mā* ("what", "that which"), implicit, and this can be seen in the verse: *And when you see there, you will see bliss and a great dominion* (76:20). The intended meaning is: "you will see what is there." Alternatively, the phrase could be understood as "from the fruits of the date palms and the grapes, there is something you make use of", based on the view that it is not permissible to omit the relative pronoun and keep its clause, as suggested by the grammarians of Basra.

However, some linguists do not accept the omission of the relative pronoun, leading to the interpretation of this verse as "from the fruits of the date palms and grapes, comes something you make into an intoxicant and a good provision."

Alternatively, the verse could be read as a verbal sentence attached to "God sends down rain," meaning "God gave you from the fruits of the date palms and grapes," and then the separate sentence "you take from it an intoxicant and good provision."

The meaning of "you take from it an intoxicant and good provision" is that from the mentioned fruits, date palms and grapes, one derives something like wine in its various forms that intoxicates, along with good, clean sustenance like raisins, grape syrup, and other edibles that count as provisions.

The phrase "You take from it intoxicants and good provisions" does not imply that intoxicants are permissible. This noble verse does not intend to declare that intoxicants are lawful or permissible. It does not even suggest that it is commendable to derive intoxicants from the mentioned fruits. Rather, it could be interpreted as condemning this practice because the taking of intoxicants is contrasted with the acquisition of good sustenance, indicating that intoxicants are not considered good sustenance. However, if we do not accept this interpretation, we also do not accept the opposite, as the verse is not primarily about defining what is lawful or unlawful. Its purpose is to enumerate the benefits that humanity at the time derived from these fruits, affirming that all these benefits are divine blessings and lead to the recognition of monotheism. The verse was revealed in Mecca and addressed to the polytheists.

Therefore, the verse does not contain a religious ruling, so we cannot claim that it has been abrogated or not abrogated by the verse that prohibits alcohol. This understanding also invalidates the statement of someone who claimed that this verse was abrogated by a verse in *Sūrah al-Mā'idah*, according to the narration attributed to Qatādah.

The author of *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī* has made an unusual statement, saying that interpreting *sukr* as wine is reported from Ibn Masʿūd, Ibn ʿUmar, Abū Razīn, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Mujāhid, al-Shaʿbī, Nakhaʿī, Ibn Abī Laylah, Abū Thawr, Kalbī, and Ibn Jubayr, among many others. The verse was revealed in Mecca when wine was lawful, and consumed by sinners, Muslims, and

disbelievers alike. Its prohibition occurred in Medina, and the verse *O you who have believed, indeed, intoxicants, gambling, sacrificing on stone altars, and divining arrows are but defilement from the work of Satan, so avoid it* abrogated it.

Some have argued that the verse in question, although revealed before the prohibition, was not abrogated because *sukr* does not mean wine but vinegar, as per the language of the people of Ethiopia, or, as reported from Abū ʿUbaydah, it refers to a type of sweet consumed as a snack. The jurists of the Ḥanafī school, believing in the non-abrogation, argue that *sukr* refers to the amount of alcohol that does not cause intoxication. They base their argument on the fact that God in this verse bestows a favor upon His servants with things He has created for them, and it is logical to bestow favors with things that are lawful, not unlawful. Hence, the mere fact that God has bestowed *sukr* as a favor is evidence that alcohol, in small amounts that do not cause intoxication, is lawful, while excess leading to intoxication is unlawful

Regarding the statement that wine was prohibited in Medina, we have previously discussed this in detail in Sūrah al-Mā'ida, providing evidence that wine was, in fact, prohibited before the Emigration to Medina. One of the well-known Islamic rulings among the polytheists was the prohibition of wine and adultery. The prohibition was revealed in Sūrah Al-Aʿrāf, which was undoubtedly revealed before Sūrah al-Naḥl, and also in Sūrah al-Baqarah and Sūrah al-Nisā', which were revealed before al-Mā'idah.

We mentioned that the purpose of the verse in Sūrah al-Mā'ida was to emphasize the prohibition and to reprimand some Muslims who were deviating from this ruling. The narrations support this, and according to *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī* own words, both Muslims and disbelievers used to consume it. The verses themselves contain expressions supporting this interpretation, such as the phrase: *Will you, then, relinquish?* (5:91).

As for the claim attributed to Ibn Abbas that *sukr* means vinegar in the Ethiopian language, this lacks credible evidence. While the Qur'an often uses non-Arabic words like *istabraq*, *jahannam*, *zaqqum*, and others, these are used in contexts where there is no ambiguity or confusion. However, using *sukr*, which means wine in Arabic but vinegar in Ethiopian, would lead to confusion. It is implausible that a book composed in the most eloquent speech would use the word *sukr* (from Ethiopian) in a context that

discusses vinegar, instead of using the well-established Arabic word *khall*.

Regarding the view attributed to Abū ʿUbaydah, this has already been addressed earlier in the discussion.

As for the view attributed to the Ḥanafīs, namely that *sukr* refers to raisins and that the verse indicates the permissibility of consuming a small amount of alcohol that does not cause intoxication because the verse presents it as a divine favor, this is a flawed argument. The verse does not imply favoring people in any way; it simply enumerates blessings, including dates and grapes. Dates and grapes are blessings, not every use people make of them, whether lawful or unlawful. Had all human uses been considered blessings, *sukr* would not have been contrasted with "good sustenance", a contrast that implies some form of reprimand or admonition. This is acknowledged by al-Bayḍāwī and others.

Additionally, the verse itself does not specify *sukr* as being limited to raisins or a drink, nor does it specify a small amount that leads to intoxication, nor anything else. Thus, if the making of *sukr* was counted among the blessings of God, and the verse indicates its permissibility, you must then concede that the verse explicitly allows all types of alcohol. Why not say this? Moreover, the verse is not abrogated since when the language is one of favor, it does not expire to be abrogated later by another verse. How can it be conceivable for God to count something among His blessings and express favor for it, and then call the same thing an abomination and the work of Satan, as in Sūrah al-Mā'ida? Such an act would be one of the impossibilities attributed to the divine, which is impossible for God.

Then, God Almighty concludes the present verse with the coda, *There are indeed signs in that for a people who apply reason*, to encourage people to think and reflect on the matter of plants and fruits.

وَأَوْحَى رَبُّكَ إِلَى النَّحْلِ أَنِ اتَّخِذِى مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا وَمِنَ الشَّجَرِ وَمِمَّا يَعْرِشُونَ ﴿٦٨﴾ ثُمَّ كُلِى مِن كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ فَاسْلُكِى سُبُلَ رَبِّكِ ذُلُلاً يَخْرُجُ مِن بُطُونِهَا شَرَابٌ مُّخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهُ فِيهِ شِفَاء لِلنَّاسِ إِنَّ فِى ذَلِكَ لآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾

(16:68-69) And your Lord inspired (*awḥā*) the bee: "Make your home in the mountains, and on the trees and what they erect.

Then eat from every fruit and follow meekly (*dhulul*) the ways of your Lord." There issues from its belly a juice of diverse hues in which there is a cure for the people. There is indeed a sign in that for a people who reflect.

According to al-Rāghib, *waḥī* means to quickly indicate, usually in the form of speech, symbolically or through sound, uncomposed or through gestures, among other means. From its uses, it is evident that it refers to the subtle conveyance of a meaning that is hidden from others. Thus, inspiration (*ilhām*), meaning the conveyance of meaning into the understanding of animals through instinct, is also a form of revelation, just like the entrance of ideas into a person's psyche through dreams, whisperings, or indications, all of which are forms of revelation. In the Qur'an, this term is used in all these meanings. In one place, it is used for the conveyance of meaning through instinct, as in: *And your Lord inspired the bee*, through dreams, as in *We revealed to Moses' mother ...* (28:7), through whispering, as in *Indeed the devils inspire their friends ...* (6:121), and through indication, as in: *and signaled to them that they should glorify Allah in the morning and evening* (19:11). Another form of revelation involves speaking to prophets and messengers, as mentioned *And it is not for a human that Allah should speak to him except by revelation* (42:51). However, religious sensibilities in Islam dictate that the term "revelation" should only properly be attributed to the speech conveyed to prophets and messengers.

In *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, al-Ṭabrisī writes: "The word *dhulul* is the plural of *dhulūl,* meaning "tame." When one says an animal is *dhulūl* it means one whose tameness is apparent, while in reference to a man, it means one whose humility and submission are apparent."

Thus, the meaning of the verse, *And your Lord inspired the bee*, is that God inspired the honeybee through an instinct that He placed in its nature. The story of the honeybee and the remarkable system it follows in its social life and natural behavior is astonishing. Perhaps it is this extraordinary system that prompted the shift from addressing the polytheists to specifically addressing the Prophet Muḥammad by saying, *And your Lord inspired ...*

Regarding the sentence, *Make your home in the mountains, and on the trees and what they erect ...*, this is the knowledge that God inspired the bee with. Apparently, *... and what they erect ...*, refers to the places where beehives are placed.

The verse, *Then eat from every fruit*, is a command to the bee to eat from all fruits, even though the honeybee does not eat the fruits but usually settles on flowers, is because the bee's food is derived from the same basic materials as fruits, which are present in blossoms, but not yet grown and ripe.

God Almighty constructs the phrase, *and follow meekly* (dhulul) *the ways of your Lord*, as a consequence of the command to eat, reinforcing the sense that 'eating' here means collecting and bringing home to store the honey, made from the fruits. The addition of the word "Lord" in *the ways of your Lord*, indicates that all the actions and movements of the honeybee are carried out by divine inspiration.

The independent clause, *There issues from its belly a juice of diverse hues in which there is a cure for the people. There is indeed a sign in that for a people who reflect,* following the command, describes the outcome of the bee's efforts and compliance with God's command and its submission to it. The result is the emergence of a drink, honey, from its stomach, with various colors—some white, some yellow, some dark red, and some almost black—*in which there is a cure for the people*, indicating that it is a cure for many diseases.

A detailed discussion of the honeybee, this intelligent insect whose life is based on a remarkable and superior social structure, and the intricacies and realities of which cannot be fully enumerated, followed by a discussion on honey, which it produces through persistent efforts, and the properties of honey, are topics beyond the scope of this book. Readers are advised to refer to books specifically written on these topics for more information.

God Almighty concludes the present verse with the phrase, *There is indeed a sign in that for a people who reflect*. This expression is repeated in different forms throughout this section of verses. The verse related to reviving the earth after its death ends with *for a people who listen*, the verse about the fruits of palm trees and grapes ends with *for a people who apply reason*, and the verse in question about the bee concludes with *for a people who reflect*. Perhaps the reason for this is that pondering the matter of life and death naturally brings lessons and admonitions to humans, hence the expression of listening is more suitable for this context. Human attention to the fruits of trees, due to their usefulness and benefits, is a rational and argumentative view, indicative of the connection and coherence of

various systems to each other, and this perspective aligns more with the application of reason. And where it comes to the honeybee and its life full of wonders and intricacies, these secrets and details are only revealed to humans through deep thought, thus the life of the honeybee is a sign for those who contemplate.

We have already mentioned that this chapter employs various shifts of address, mainly in these verses, where in one section, the address is directed to the polytheists with mercy and compassion for their state of ignorance, and in another section, due to their disbelief and obstinacy, it turns away from addressing them and directs the speech to the Prophet Muḥammad. This shift in address is evident in the verses of this chapter, constantly alternating between addressing the polytheists and the Prophet.

وَاللَّهُ خَلَقَكُمْ ثُمَّ يَتَوَفَّاكُمْ وَمِنكُم مَّن يُرَدُّ إِلَى أَرْذَلِ الْعُمُرِ لِكَيْ لاَ يَعْلَمَ بَعْدَ عِلْمٍ شَيْئًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٧٠﴾

(16:70) Allah has created you, then He takes you away, and there are some among you who are relegated to the nethermost age (*ardhal al-ʿumur*) so that he knows nothing after some knowledge. Indeed Allah is all-knowing, all-powerful.

The word *ardhal* is the superlative form of *ridhāla*, meaning lowliness and baseness. The context of the verse, *so that he knows nothing after some knowledge*, suggests that the phrase *ardhal al-ʿumur* ("nethermost age") refers to the age of senility and old age, in which a person's cognitive and perceptual faculties decline. This decline varies with different temperaments and generally starts around the age of seventy-five.

The verse means that: "God created you, people, then He takes your lives at an average age. However, some of you live to old age, regressing so much due to the weakening of cognitive abilities that after a lifetime of knowledge, they know nothing. This itself is evidence that your life, death, consciousness, and knowledge are not in your hands. Otherwise, you would have retained your intellect for yourself and preserved your life. Rather, this life and knowledge, with their intricate system, are linked to the knowledge and power of God." This is why the matter is concluded with the phrase, *Indeed Allah is all-knowing, all-powerful*.

وَاللَّهُ فَضَّلَ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ فِي الرِّزْقِ فَمَا الَّذِينَ فُضِّلُوا بِرَادِّي
رِزْقِهِمْ عَلَى مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ فَهُمْ فِيهِ سَوَاءٌ أَفَبِنِعْمَةِ اللَّهِ يَجْحَدُونَ ﴿٧١﴾

(16:71) Allah has granted some of you an advantage over others in provision (*rizq*). Those who have been granted an advantage do not give over their provision to their slaves so that they become equal in its respect. What, will they dispute the blessing of Allah?

God has favored some people over others in terms of sustenance and wealth. *Rizq* (sustenance) is what sustains life. This differentiation sometimes relates to quantity, like in poverty and wealth, where a wealthy person is favored multiple times over a poor one. Other times, it is about quality, such as having the independence to manage one's wealth versus not having it, like a free man who has full control over his property, whereas his slave does not have this autonomy and can only act with the master's permission. Similarly, minor children are dependent on their guardians, and livestock and domestic animals depend on their owners.

However, the phrase, *Those who have been granted an advantage do not give over their provision to their slaves so that they become equal in its respect*, implies that the type of favoritism being referred to here is qualitative rather than quantitative. It means that some have been granted freedom and independence with what they possess, to the extent that they neither transfer this freedom and independence to their subordinates, nor can they do so. That is, they cannot make their slaves equal in owning that freedom and independence, thereby dissolving the mastership and ownership.

Hence, this favor is among those that cannot be ignored or transferred to others once possessed. And this favor comes only from God Almighty. The concept of mastership and slavery, although a social construct based on human opinions and societal customs, has its roots in human nature, which has led people to accept it, just like other social matters.

This is evident in the practices of civilized nations that, despite having officially abolished the tradition of slavery long ago and having it ratified by both Western and Eastern nations, still respect the concept of slavery. They may have abolished its form but continue to apply its essence in various ways. In other words, they have shifted from individual slavery to subjugating entire societies, a practice that will continue indefinitely since

humans cannot close the door on the competition for superiority. This topic has been further discussed in a later volume of this commentary.

Regarding our statement that qualitative superiority is one of God's blessings, the reason is that the dominance of one group of people over another itself is beneficial for human society. This is because the dominant group, due to its strength, manages the affairs of the subordinate group, thus completing their lives.

Thus, the phrase, *so that they become equal in its respect*, begins with the causative *fa* ("so"), indicating that this phrase is a derivative of the object of the negation in *Those who have been granted an advantage ...*, not the negation itself. The meaning is: "The superior class does not give their sustenance to their slaves to be equal and partners, because doing so would dissolve their mastery and lordship." If it were derived from the negation, the meaning would have been incorrect, as it would imply that the superior class does not give their sustenance to the lower class, and therefore they are equal, which is not the case if they do not give.

It is also possible that the phrase is a rhetorical question with the interrogative particle omitted and the question being one of denial. It aims to negate the equality of the superior and the inferior, asking: Even though we see the superior not giving their priority to the subordinate, are they still equal? No, because if they were equal, the superior class would be willing to give their sustenance to the subordinate class. Hence, it is clear that this blessing is specifically granted by God to the superior class.

Therefore, the following phrase, *will they dispute the blessing of Allah?* is a rhetorical, reproachful question, seemingly derived from the previous phrase and implying denial. The "blessing" mentioned here refers to the aforementioned superiority.

Therefore, the meaning of the verse is: "God has differentiated among you in such a way that some of you are favored over others in terms of sustenance. Some are made free and independent in managing their wealth, while others are made slaves, dependent on their masters for permission to act. Those who are superior do not give their sustenance, which comes with freedom and independence, to their subordinates and slaves to become equal in sustenance. Therefore, these two classes are not equal. The sustenance accompanied by freedom and independence is a blessing that God has specifically bestowed upon the superior class. Do they still deny God's

blessing?"

This is the apparent meaning of the verse, supported by the context and accompanying cues. The context of the verses is about counting blessings and acknowledging them.

Other explanations that have been offered for the aforementioned verse include:

Some have said it means: "People are not willing to share their wealth and spouses with their slaves to be equal with them, as they perceive this equality as a form of deficiency for themselves. So, how can I, God, make My creations partners in My dominion and divinity so that people may worship them just as they worship Me, and seek closeness to them just as they seek closeness to Me? Thus, those who worship Jesus, son of Mary, do they consider their God to be less than an ordinary master?"

Others have said that this verse conveys the same message as the verse: *He sets forth for you a parable from your own selves: Do you have among those whom your right hands possess any partners in the wealth We have provided for you so that you are equal therein?* (30:28). They further say that the verse in question was revealed regarding the Christians of Najran.

However, as we mentioned, the context of the verse is about enumerating blessings to present the case for monotheism, not contradiction or reproach, as there is no trace of reproach or contradiction in it.

Furthermore, the verse is one of those revealed in Mecca, and the Prophet had no encounter with the Christians of Najran in Mecca. The Christians of Najran came to him in Medina, either in the sixth year AH or later. Comparing this verse with the verse from Sūrah al-Rūm is also incorrect, as the two have different contexts: This verse uses the context of argumentation through counting blessings, while the latter verse uses reproach for polytheism.

Another reading of the verse is that those whom God has favored with sustenance and freedom should not think they are the providers for their slaves. God provides sustenance for their slaves just as He provides for the masters. If the masters give something to their slaves, it is from the sustenance that God has provided them. Therefore, both groups are equal in the eyes of God.

The essence of this explanation is that the phrase, *so that they become equal in its respect*, stands in for an implicit objection, with the implication

being: "The masters do not give their sustenance to their slaves; rather, it is God who provides for the slaves through the masters, and both groups are equal in terms of sustenance before God."

However, the problem with this interpretation is that the equality mentioned at the end of the verse would negate the initial statement of superiority in the verse, essentially implying that there is no superiority. This contradicts the phrase, *will they dispute the blessing of Allah?*

Some others have suggested that the verse means: The masters never relinquish control of their sustenance to their slaves to act like them and become equal to them.

This interpretation also has a problem because it essentially means that a person prevents others from having control over their property. This notion is not exclusive to subordinates and slaves, and therefore, mentioning slaves specifically is redundant. If one argues that it refers to not giving to subordinates because of having control over them, it returns to the meaning we have proposed: the blessing highlighted in this verse is the masters' control over their slaves and their superiority in terms of owning sustenance compared to the slaves.

وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنْ أَزْوَاجِكُم
بَنِينَ وَحَفَدَةً وَرَزَقَكُم مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ أَفَبِالْبَاطِلِ يُؤْمِنُونَ وَبِنِعْمَتِ اللَّهِ
هُمْ يَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾

(16:72) Allah made for you mates from your own selves and appointed for you, from your mates, children and grandchildren (*ḥafada*), and We provided you with all the good things (*min al-ṭayyibāt*). What, will they believe in falsehood while they deny the blessing of Allah?

Al-Rāghib in *al-Mufradāt* writes that God states: *and appointed for you, from your mates, children and grandchildren*. The word *ḥafada* is the plural of *ḥāfid*, which literally means "one who is busy and rushing to serve others" whether relatives or strangers. Commentators have interpreted *ḥafada* as grandchildren, as the idea of serving relatives applies most readily to them. Al-Asmaʿī has said that the root meaning of *ḥafad* is "to place one foot in the place of another without stopping." In *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*,

al-Ṭabrisī writes that *ḥafad* originally means speed in action. It is also used for aides as they are quick in obeying commands.

In the verse, *ḥafada* refers to helpers and servants among children, as it specifies that they have come from spouses. Therefore, some have interpreted "children" and *ḥafada* as referring to young and adult children, while others have interpreted "children" as immediate children and *ḥafada* as grandchildren.

Therefore, the verse means: "God has provided you with children and helpers from your spouses, to assist you in your needs. You can avert difficulties and unpleasant situations through their efforts. Also, God has given you delightful provisions including water, various fruits whose production you did not contribute to, and other items such as food and clothing, which are the result of your own efforts." The preposition in *min* in the phrase *min al-ṭayyibāt* ("the good things") implies a distinction, the reason for which is clear.

Then, the verse admonishes the polytheists, stating, *What, will they believe in falsehood* ... referring to idols, the attribution of daughters to God and sons to themselves, and laws legislated by their misguided leaders, *while they deny the blessing of Allah?* The favor mentioned here includes the spouses of their own kind, and children and grandchildren that arise from these spouses. This is among the greatest and most apparent favors, as it forms the foundation of human society. Without it, no society would be formed, nor would collaboration and cooperative efforts among individuals exist, ultimately preventing humanity from achieving worldly and spiritual prosperity.

Indeed, if humanity were to sever this natural bond bestowed by God and break this connecting thread, no alternative method could replace this natural connection. The disintegration of human unity and the scattering of its solidarity would inevitably lead to its destruction.

This verse, following the previous one, addresses the fact that the polytheists deny God's blessings and worship entities other than God that do not possess any control over providing sustenance from the heavens and the earth...

وَيَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لاَ يَمْلِكُ لَهُمْ رِزْقًا مِّنَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ شَيْئًا وَلاَ يَسْتَطِيعُونَ ﴿٧٣﴾

(16:73) They worship besides Allah what has no power to provide them with anything from the heavens and the earth (*mā lam yamliku rizqan min al-samawāt wa al-arḍ shay'an*), nor are they capable.

Interpreters have said: "The word *rizq* ("provision") is a verbal noun, and *shay'* ("anything") is its object. The meaning is thus: "They worship those who cannot provide them with anything as sustenance."

Others have interpreted *rizq* as referring to the one being provided for, and *shay'* a permutation of it. Yet another group has said that *shay'* is an absolute object, implying that they worship that which does not possess the power to provide them with provision and which, in fact, does not possess anything in the heavens or the earth. Of these explanations, the middle one seems the most accurate and appropriate.

It is also possible to say that the phrase, *from the heavens and the earth*, is an extension of *rizq*, representing a part of the whole. The meaning would then be: "They worship things that are not only unable to provide sustenance but also own nothing in the entirety of the heavens and the earth." And the phrase, *nor are they capable*, implies that they are incapable of owning provision or anything at all. This could also be read as signifying that they are utterly incapable of anything whatsoever.

This verse combines two considerations regarding idols, typically made from stone, wood, gold, or silver: First, they are considered non-sentient, hence the use of the non-sentient pronoun *mā* ("what") in *ma lā yamliku*. However, since they were regarded and worshiped as deities, they are also treated as sentient beings, using the masculine plural, which is normally for sentient beings in *nor are they capable* (*wa lā yastaṭīʿūn*).

This verse offers another way to emphasize the main purpose of enumerating blessings, returning to elaborate on the primary outcome, which is the affirmation of monotheism, prophethood, and the afterlife. Across four verses, it delineates the primary conclusion of affirming monotheism, denying the likenesses they set up for God, illustrating the uniqueness of God in lordship, presenting a parable for prophethood and legislation, and addressing the matter of resurrection.

فَلاَ تَضْرِبُواْ لِلَّهِ الأَمْثَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنتُمْ لاَ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾

(16:74) So do not draw comparisons for Allah: indeed Allah knows and you do not know

From the apparent meaning of the verse, it seems that drawing comparisons for God refers to describing Him with a kind of metaphor known in literary terms as a "similitude." For instance, saying things about God like: He has daughters as humans do, angels are His daughters, there is a kinship between God and the jinn, and questioning how God can revive bones after they have decayed. The usual meaning of drawing comparisons, as used in the Qur'an, is what we have described. This was also mentioned earlier in the verses where it was stated: *For those who do not believe in the Hereafter is the description of evil, and for God is the highest description*.

Therefore, the verse means that since matters are as stated, do not describe God in such a way; that is, do not liken Him to others or compare Him with His creation, because God knows, and you do not understand the realities and the essence of God.

Some commentators have said that the term "drawing comparisons" actually means making equivalents or likening, and "comparisons" here means equivalents. Thus, the phrase "Do not draw comparisons for God" conveys the same meaning as the verse: *Do not set up rivals to God*. However, this interpretation seems distant from the actual meaning of the verse.

ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلاً عَبْدًا مَّمْلُوكًا لاَّ يَقْدِرُ عَلَى شَيْءٍ وَمَن رَّزَقْنَاهُ مِنَّا رِزْقًا حَسَنًا فَهُوَ يُنفِقُ مِنْهُ سِرًّا وَجَهْرًا هَلْ يَسْتَوُونَ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾

(16:75) Allah draws a parable: a slave who has no power over anything, and one whom We have provided a goodly provision and who spends out of it secretly and openly. Are they equal (*yastawūn*)? All praise belongs to Allah. But most of them do not know.

The parable presented in this verse is of a slave who is completely owned and powerless, juxtaposed with another person who has been given bountiful provision by God, from which he spends both openly and secretly. The question then posed is whether these two can be considered equal. The contrast between these two hypothetical individuals, each characterized by

attributes contrary to the other, highlights their distinct natures.

The enslaved individual, entirely owned and without any possessions or the ability to manage any wealth of his own, is contrasted with someone who is not only free but also endowed with wealth from God, which he manages and from which he gives generously. The rhetorical question "Are they equal?" obviously anticipates a negative response, thereby affirming that God, as the ultimate Provider and Owner of everything, is unequaled by any of His creations. This is because all other entities do not own anything themselves, neither for themselves nor for others, and are incapable of managing any affairs. Thus, the polytheists' claim of other gods existing alongside God is erroneous, as these supposed deities are merely God's creations.

The use of the plural form *yastawūn* instead of the dual *yastawiyān* ("they two are equal") indicates that the discussion is about the general nature of a slave and a free person, not about specific individuals, contrary to what some commentators have assumed.

The statement, *All praise belongs to Allah*, means that all praise (*ḥamd*), which is the recognition of a voluntary act of goodness, belongs to God Almighty, because all beautiful blessings come from Him. Since praise is specifically for that which is beautiful, all forms of praise are uniquely His, just as the essence of praise itself is His alone.

This sentence concludes the argument, emphasizing that a powerless slave who cannot give anything to anyone is not equal to a master who owns provisions and can dispense them as he wishes. God Almighty is the one who deserves praise in every aspect, as no blessing exists that is not His creation. Thus, every attribute worthy of praise, be it creation, provision, mercy, forgiveness, kindness, beneficence, or others, is possessed by God. Therefore, all expressions of beautiful praise belong to Him. The entities worshiped by polytheists, whatever they may be, are merely owned and powerless. Hence, God Almighty is the one and only Lord.

Some have said that "praise" in this present verse refers to gratitude for the blessings of God Almighty. Others have interpreted the statement, *All praise belongs to Allah*, as referring to the completeness and strength of the argument presented. Yet another group of commentators suggests that it aims to instill in the servants the notion to proclaim: "All praise is due to God, who has guided us to His monotheism and directed us toward

gratitude for His blessings." However, none of these explanations merit credence.

The meaning of the phrase, *But most of them do not know*, is that most polytheists are unaware that all blessings come from God, and that no one else owns anything or has any power. Instead, they attribute a share of ownership and power, albeit delegated, to their deities and worship these entities in hopes of their favors or in fear of their harm. This is the common condition of the polytheists. However, a minority among them, the elite, are aware of the truth but turn away from it due to arrogance and obstinacy. Thus, it becomes clear that the verse presents a parable about God and the polytheists' associates, who they believe share in God's lordship.

Some have also said that this parable exemplifies the state of the humiliated disbelievers and the successful believers. Disbelievers, whose good deeds are nullified and disregarded, resemble slaves who have no power over anything. Even if they give much, they are not acknowledged as benevolent. In contrast, a believer is guided by God toward His satisfaction, and God appreciates even the smallest good deed that they do, whether done in secret or openly. However, this explanation is not valid as it does not align with the context of argumentation that characterizes the discussed verses.

As previously mentioned, this verse is one of three consecutive verses addressing the same purpose: enumerating God's blessings to affirm monotheism. It contrasts the situation of the one who bestows all blessings with that of someone who owns nothing and is incapable of anything, concluding that the true Lord is the sole benefactor, and no other.

وَضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلاً رَّجُلَيْنِ أَحَدُهُمَا أَبْكَمُ لاَ يَقْدِرُ عَلَىَ شَىْءٍ وَهُوَ كَلٌّ عَلَى مَوْلاهُ أَيْنَمَا يُوَجِّههُّ لاَ يَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ هَلْ يَسْتَوِى هُوَ وَمَن يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَهُوَ عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٧٦﴾

(16:76) Allah draws a parable: Two men, one of whom is dumb (*abkam*), having no power over anything and who is a liability (*kall*) to his master: wherever he directs him (*tawjīh*) he does not bring any good. Is he equal to someone who enjoins justice and is on a straight path?

In *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, al-Ṭabrisī says *abkam* refers to someone who is

born mute, unable to understand or be understood. It is also said that it refers to one who is unable to speak, *kall* means to be burdensome or difficult. If a matter is too heavy or burdensome, it is said, 'it became *kall* on him, hence he did not undertake it.'

The verb *kallat al-sikkīn* means "the knife has become dull or blunt." A tongue is described as *kall* when it does not articulate speech due to its thickness and loss of sharpness. Thus, the root of the term is heaviness, which prevents penetration or effectiveness. *Tawjīh* means to send someone in a certain direction, as in: "I directed him to such a place, and he headed toward it."

So, the statement *Allah draws a parable: Two men* ... draws a comparison between two hypothetical men who are opposites in terms of their described traits.

And His statement, *one of whom is dumb, having no power over anything* means deprived of understanding speech and communicating with others through speech due to being mute, unable to hear and speak. Thus, he lacks all the capacities and advantages that a person acquires through hearing, which is the widest of the senses in scope. Through hearing, a person gains knowledge of past events and occurrences beyond the sight, understands what is in people's hearts, and learns various sciences and arts. Through it, a person can convey significant and intricate meanings to others. The mute person is unable to grasp any of this except for the very little that sight can aid, supplemented by gestures.

The phrase, *having no power over anything*, is specified for the mute person because, as we mentioned, a mute person is capable of limited understanding. Therefore, the meaning of this phrase becomes: one of the two individuals is mute and incapable of any perception that a non-mute person has.

The phrase, *and who is a liability to his master*, means that he is dependent on someone else for his affairs. He cannot manage his own matters. The subsequent phrase, *wherever he directs him, he does not bring any good* implies that the master, no matter where he sends the mute person or for whatever purpose, the mute person is unable to accomplish the task. He cannot fulfill the needs of his master or his own.

This example describes one of the two hypothetical individuals. The example of the second individual is not mentioned because the listener can

infer his characteristics from the first. The verse succinctly sums up the second person's traits by referring to justice, stating: *Is he equal to someone who enjoins justice ...?*

Thus, the phrase, *Is he equal to someone who enjoins justice and is on a straight path?* points to the characteristics of the second hypothetical person, questioning whether these two individuals, if compared, are equal.

Regarding the description, the man is portrayed with the utmost good and perfection that one can possess other than being mute. This good and perfection is justice, which is committing to the middle path in actions and avoiding excess or deficiency. Indeed, enjoining justice, when genuinely practiced, necessitates that righteousness prevails in a person's character, then extends to their actions, maintaining moderation in affairs. Then, one desires this moderation to extend to others' actions, enjoining them to justice. As you know, justice, in general, means avoiding excess and deficiency, i.e., righteous deeds encompass more than just fairness in governance.

Then he is described as being "on a straight path," which is the clear way that guides its travelers to their destination without deviation. A person who, in their life's journey, is on a straight path conducts their actions according to human nature without contradicting some actions with others or deviating from what they perceive as true. In summary, there is no inconsistency or contradiction in their actions.

Describing this hypothetical man, who enjoins justice and is on a straight path, firstly implies that his enjoining of justice is not a matter of preaching righteousness to others while neglecting himself. Rather, he is upright in his conditions and actions, practicing justice as he preaches it.

Secondly, his enjoining of justice is not a novelty without a foundation to build upon. Instead, he himself is on the straight path, and it is natural for him to want the same for others, thus he enjoins them to adhere to the middle way and avoid the extremes of excess and deficiency.

As for the question, namely, *Is he equal to someone who enjoins justice ...?*, it is a rhetorical question with the only answer being a denial, undoubtedly. This confirms that what they worship besides God, like idols and statues, devoid of power and unable to guide themselves or others, does not equate to God, who is on a straight path in His essence, guiding others by sending messengers and legislating laws.

From this, it appears that the parable mentioned in the verse is related

to God's statement, *Then is He who guides to the truth more worthy to be followed, or he who finds not guidance unless he is guided? Then what is the matter with you? How do you judge?* (10:35). God, the Exalted, is on a straight path in His attributes and actions. Part of the straightness of His path is that He assigns purposes to His creations, so creation is not in vain, as He says, *And We did not create the heaven and the earth and that between them aimlessly* (38:27). He guides each creation toward its specific purpose as He created it and assigned it a purpose, as He says, *Who gave everything its creation and then guided it* (20:50), guiding humanity toward a deliberate path, as mentioned, *With Allah rests guidance to the straight path* (16:9) and *Indeed, We guided him to the way* (Qur'an 76:3).

This principle forms the basis of the argument for prophethood and legislation, which has been thoroughly discussed in the sections on prophethood in the second part of the book and in the stories of Noah in the tenth part.

The purpose of the parable in this verse is to establish an argument for monotheism, with an indication toward prophethood and legislation.

It has been said that the parable is about those from whom good is expected and those from whom it is not. The origin of all good is from God Almighty, so how can He be equated with anything else in worship?

The context, however, is more specific than that. It is a parable about one who is inherently good, who commands justice—a characteristic unique to Almighty God, unlike others. Yet, they do not equate Him with others in worship; instead, they leave Him and worship others.

It has also been said that the parable compares a believer and a non-believer, where the mute person represents the non-believer, and the one who commands justice represents the believer. However, while the verse can indeed apply to a believer and a non-believer, or to anyone who commands justice and anyone who remains silent about it, its indication within the context of enumerating blessings and arguing for monotheism and related principles is something else. From this perspective, the subject of the parable is God Almighty and what is worshiped besides Him, not others.

However, the proponent of this explanation has confused the lexical meaning of the verse with its contextual meaning. Indeed, while the lexical content of the verse may fit the notion of a believer and disbeliever, or one who commands justice and another who remains silent, its contextual

meaning within the verses enumerating God's blessings, arguing for monotheism, and affirming other religious principles, is quite different.

We do not say that the verse does not fit with their explanation, but rather that the context must also be considered. In view of this aspect, the noble verse only pertains to one scenario, and aligns with only one situation, namely God Almighty and the idols that were worshiped, and nothing else.

وَلِلَّهِ غَيْبُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ وَمَا أَمْرُ السَّاعَةِ إِلاَّ كَلَمْحِ الْبَصَرِ أَوْ هُوَ أَقْرَبُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٧٧﴾

(16:77) To Allah belongs the Unseen of the heavens and the earth. The matter of the Hour is just like the twinkling of an eye, or even swifter. Indeed Allah has power over all things.

In the expressions of the Qur'an, the Unseen is often contrasted with the witnessed, repeatedly stating, *Knower of the Unseen and the witnessed*. We have mentioned several times that the Unseen and the witnessed are relative terms, meaning that a matter may be unseen or hidden in relation to one thing, and witnessed or observable in relation to another.

Given that some things have aspects that are partially visible to others and partially hidden, meaning they encompass both the unseen and the witnessed, the addition of 'the unseen' and 'the witnessed' to something sometimes implies 'from' in the sense of ownership. For instance, 'the unseen of the heavens and the earth' could mean what is hidden and external to their limits. This notion also includes a type of specificity, as in the verse, *And He does not disclose His unseen to anyone* (72:26).

Alternatively, it can mean "of" or something similar, suggesting that "the unseen of the heavens and the earth" refers to what is contained within them, as opposed to what is visible. In other words, it is what remains hidden from understanding concerning their nature, as opposed to what is manifest.

The Hour (Day of Judgment) belongs to the unseen of the heavens and the earth in this second sense:

Firstly, because God counts it among the Unseen in His discourse, and it is not external to the matter of the heavens and the earth, so it belongs to the unseen in this sense.

Secondly, because the descriptions given of the Hour, such as the day when God informs them of their differing beliefs, the day when secrets are laid bare, and the day when humans speak, for example, *You were certainly in oblivion of this, and We have removed from you your cover, so your sight, this day, is acute* (50:22), or when they address their Lord, saying, *Our Lord, we have seen and heard, so return us; we will do righteous deeds* (32:12), all indicate the Hour as a day when hidden truths of this world are made manifestly clear. These truths are not external to the heavens and the earth; they exist alongside them.

Moreover, God states, *And to Allah belongs the unseen of the heavens and the earth* (16:77), affirming His ownership of this unseen realm. His ownership is not merely conceptual but relates to something concrete, despite our ignorance of its true nature.

Numerous Qur'anic verses support this reading. For instance, God describes life in this world as a deceptive enjoyment and a game, repeatedly stating that most people do not understand the reality of the Day of Judgment. He mentions that the hereafter is the true life, and on that Day, people will realize that God is the manifest truth, and they will see from God what they did not expect. These and other verses in their various languages allude to this concept.

In summary, the Hour is part of the unseen of the heavens and the earth. The verse, *To Allah belongs the Unseen of the heavens and the earth* (16:77), affirms His total ownership of this Unseen, not merely His knowledge of it. He does not say, "And to God belongs the knowledge of the unseen of the heavens and the earth." The context of the verse suggests that it serves as a prelude to the statement, *The matter of the Hour is just like the twinkling of an eye* (16:77), making it an argumentative statement.

Based on this, the verse implies that God Almighty is the sovereign of the unseen aspects of the heavens and the earth. He possesses a dominion that enables Him to control these unseen aspects in any way He wishes, just as He can control their visible and apparent aspects. And why not? Since the unseen of anything is not separate from its visible aspect, and the unseen is a firm existence alongside the visible. Both the creation and command, which represent the visible and the unseen, belong to God. The Hour, or the promised Day of Judgment, is not an impossible matter beyond His power; rather, it is part of the unseen aspects of the heavens and the earth, a

reality of the heavens and earth currently hidden from human understanding. Thus, the Day of Judgment is also under God's dominion, and He can manipulate it, keeping it hidden for a day and revealing it on another.

The statement, *The matter of the Hour is just like the twinkling of an eye, or even swifter, Indeed Allah has power over all things*—is not difficult for Him because His command is as swift as blinking an eye or even swifter, given His power over all things.

Based on this, it becomes evident that the verse, *The matter of the Hour is just like the twinkling of an eye, or even swifter, Indeed Allah has power over all things* (16:77), is not directed toward establishing the fundamental existence or possibility of the Hour. Rather, it negates the notion of difficulty or hardship in its occurrence, emphasizing the ease with which God can bring it about.

The phrase, *The matter of the Hour is just like the twinkling of an eye, or even swifter* implies that, in relation to God, the Hour is not burdensome. Although God has portrayed the Hour as momentous, even daunting, in other verses, such as, *It is heavy upon the heavens and the earth* (7:187), comparing its occurrence to the blink of an eye is from the perspective of the listener. The blink of an eye, being one of the lightest and quickest human actions, serves as an analogy for ease of understanding. Thus, when followed by, *or even swifter*, it suggests a contrast, as if God is saying, "The ease and simplicity of the Hour, in relation to Us, is comparable to one of you blinking. However, in reality, it is even more immediate than that," as indicated in another verse, *And the day He says, 'Be,' and it is* (6:73). To God, the command of the Hour is as effortless as the simplest of creations.

The subsequent part, *Indeed Allah has power over all things*, underlines that His omnipotence makes all things equal in relation to Him.

Beware of assuming that the generality of omnipotence does not negate differences among things in terms of relative difficulty. The number of intermediaries between the doer and the deed, as well as conditions and obstacles, certainly affects this. For example, a human is capable of both breathing and carrying manageable weights, but these are not equally easy tasks.

This misunderstanding overlooks the nature of absolute omnipotence. Human power is limited; for instance, a person's ability to eat is conditioned by the availability of food, its accessibility, the absence of hindrances,

and the functionality of body parts like hands and mouth. A human controls only the will to act, and everything beyond that—intermediaries, conditions, obstacles—is beyond their true control, limiting their power. When a human acts, these conditions must be met.

In contrast, God's power is inherent in His essential being, which necessarily exists and cannot cease. If His power were conditional upon external factors, it would cease to exist without them, which is impossible. Therefore, His power is absolute, unrestricted, encompassing everything equally, without any object being more difficult or easier, nearer or farther to Him. The differences lie within the objects themselves, not in relation to His power.

Another perspective is that everything in existence relies on God for its being. If we consider all existing things collectively, attributing them to God, they all fall under His power. There is no third factor that could be considered a limiting condition to His power, as that would imply a partnership in influence, which is far above God.

Regarding the interrelation of causes, conditions, and obstacles among things themselves, they necessitate the restriction of some things by others, but do not restrict the general Divine power that encompasses all. This power interacts with the restricted aspects, not the absolute. For instance, the object of power is Zayd, who is defined by his parents, time, place, etc. The existence of Zayd, with all his connections, is equivalent to the existence of the entire world, and the power that affects him affects everything precisely and individually. This power is absolute, unrestricted, without differentiation among things in relation to it. The differences lie within the things themselves.

From the foregoing, it is clear that the universality of God's power eliminates differences among things in terms of ease and difficulty. The noble verse demonstrates:

(1) The true nature of resurrection is the revelation of the reality of things after their concealment.

(2) Divine power encompasses all things equally, without distinction in ease, difficulty, proximity, or distance.

(3) Things, in reality, are interconnected in existence, such that the creation of one implies the creation of all, all being subject to a single power with no other influence.

There is a simpler perspective, considering the system of causes and effects. God has verified this in His speech, as explained in the discussion of miracles in the first part of the book. From this viewpoint, things are separate, with the existence of some depending on the existence or absence of others, leading to sequence, ease, difficulty, and causes acting as intermediates between them and God. This is a simple view.

Many commentators have mentioned regarding, *And to Allah belongs the unseen of the heavens and the earth*, that it implies omission, meaning the knowledge of the unseen. However, this interpretation breaks the connection between this sentence and what follows, as there is no link between the knowledge of the unseen and the ease of the Hour. The sentence then becomes a digression, unnecessary in the discourse.

Some commentators have noted that the meaning here refers to the knowledge of the unseen aspects of the heavens and the earth, not through an implicit understanding of 'knowledge' in the discourse. This implies that the 'unseen' related to the heavens and the earth encompasses unknown matters within them, both present and future. God's dominion over these unseen matters is equated to His knowledge of them.

However, this last premise is disputable, as previously explained. The issue of the connection between the two sentences remains unresolved.

Furthermore, some have attempted to explain the rationale derived *Indeed Allah has power over all things* by suggesting that among the things God is capable of is the establishment of the Hour in the briefest possible time.

This explanation, however, does not adequately address the implications of the negation and affirmation inherent in the exclusivity of the statement. It would only be sufficient if it were said that God will make the occurrence of the Hour as swift as the blinking of an eye, while it might not necessarily be so. This should be understood in its proper context.

Examining Narrations

(1) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, concerning the phrase, *We give you to drink of that which is in their bellies from between waste and blood* (16:66), a narration from Imam ʿAlī states that "excretion" refers to what is in the stomach of the cattle.

(2) In *al-Kāfī*, ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm narrates from his father, from Nawfulī,

from Sukūnī, who reported that Imam al-Ṣādiq said: "No one chokes when drinking milk, nor does milk cause choking, as God Almighty has said *as pure milk, pleasant to those who drink.*"

(3) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, with its chain of narrators from ʿAlī b. Mughīra, it is narrated from Imam al-Ṣādiq, in explanation of the verse, *And your Lord inspired the bee* (16:68): "We are the bees to whom God has revealed—to take the mountains, homes. He ordered us to take Shiʿa from the Arabs—*and on the trees*—meaning from the non-Arabs—*and what they erect*—from the clients— *There issues from its belly a juice of diverse hues*—it is the knowledge that comes out from us to you."

Author's comment: There are other narrations in this regard, and they are metaphorical. This is supported by some of these narrations that apply the bees to the Prophet Muḥammad and the mountains to the Quraysh, the trees to the Arabs, what they construct to the clients, and what comes out of their bellies to knowledge.

(4) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, with its chain of narrators from ʿAlī b. Mughīra, it is narrated from Imam al-Ṣādiq: "When a servant reaches a hundred years, that is the most decrepit part of life."

(5) In *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, al-Ṭabrisī narrates from ʿAlī: "The most decrepit part of life is seventy-five years," and the same is narrated from the Prophet.

Author's comment: This narration is cited in *al-Durr al-Manthūr* from al-Ṭabarī, from ʿAlī, and also from Ibn Mardawayh, from Anas, from the Prophet, a detailed hadith indicating that the most abject age is a hundred years.

(6) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it's narrated from ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Ashl from Imam al-Ṣādiq regarding the statement, *and appointed for you, from your mates, children and grandchildren*: "Descendants' refers to the sons of daughters, and we are the descendants of the Prophet of God."

(7) In the same source, from Jamīl b. Darrāj, it is narrated from Imam al-Ṣādiq that, by *ḥafada*, they mean helpers from the children.

(8) In *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, al-Ṭabrisī says that the meaning of *ḥafada* is relatives acquired through marriage by the daughter, adding that this meaning is narrated from Imam al-Ṣādiq.

Author's comment: As previously explained, there is no contradiction among these narrations.

(9) In *Tahdhīb*, al-Ṭūsī narrates via his chain of narrators from Shuʿayb Aqarqūfī from Imam al-Ṣādiq, regarding the divorce and marriage of a slave: "A slave does not have the authority to divorce or marry. Have you not heard the words of God Almighty: *a slave who has no power over anything*, meaning incapable of divorce and marriage without the permission of his master."

Author's comment: Several other narrations on this topic have reached us through Shiʿa sources.

(10) In *Tafsīr Al-Qummī*, concerning the verse, *Is he equal to someone who enjoins justice and is on a straight path?* (16:76), it is narrated from the Imam that he said: "How can they be equal when the one who commands justice refers to the Commander of the Faithful and the Imams?"

(11) In *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, it is narrated from Ibn Shahr Āshūb, from Ḥamza b. ʿAtāʾ from Imam al-Bāqir, it is narrated, concerning the verse: *Is he equal to someone who enjoins justice and is on a straight path?*: "It refers to ʿAlī b. Abī Talib, who is on the straight path."

Author's comment: These two narrations are specific instances of a general concept and, as previously stated, are not related to the reasons for revelation.

Similarly, there are narrations from Sunnī sources regarding the verse: *Allah draws a parable: a slave who has no power over anything* ... One tradition interprets it as referring to Hishām b. ʿAmr, who gave charity secretly and openly, and his slave Abū al-Jawza advised against it. Another explanation says it refers to ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān and his slave.

There are also narrations related to the verse, *Allah draws a parable: Two men* ... (16:76), where the mute one is said to be Ubayy b. Khalaf, and the one commanding justice is interpreted as Ḥamza and ʿUthmān b. Maẓʿūn. Additionally, there are narrations suggesting that the mute one refers to Hāshim b. ʿUmar b. Ḥārith of Quraysh, who was stingy and hostile toward the Prophet Muḥammad. Other narrations identify the mute one as Abū Jahl, with the just one who enjoins justice being ʿAmmār b. Yāsir, and still others interpret the one who enjoins justice as ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān, while the mute as his disbelieving servant, Usayd b. Ubayy al-ʿAyṣ.

Verses 78-89

These verses enumerate additional divine blessings and then lead to a conclusion that asserts the absolute truth of God's oneness in lordship, the inevitability of resurrection on Judgment Day, and the validity of prophethood and divine laws. This conclusion is akin to the one drawn from the previous set of verses, which similarly discussed these themes.

وَاللَّهُ أَخْرَجَكُم مِّن بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ لاَ تَعْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالأَبْصَارَ وَالأَفْئِدَةَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٧٨﴾

(16:78) Allah has brought you forth from the bellies of your mothers (*ummahāt*) while you did not know anything. He made for you hearing, eyesight, and hearts (*af'ida*) so that you may give thanks.

The word *ummahāt* is the plural form of *umm*, meaning "mother", with an added *ha* sound, similar to the word *ahrāqa*, meaning 'to pour a liquid', originally *arāqa*. The plural of *umm* is *ummahāt*, but it can also appear as *amāt*. Some have said that *ummahāt* is used for humans, while *amāt* is used for animals. The word *af'ida* is the sparse plural form *fu'ād*, meaning "heart" or "understanding." No plural form for *af'ida* indicating a larger quantity has been observed.

Regarding the verse, *Allah has brought you forth from the bellies of your mothers while you did not know anything*, it negates the presence of acquired knowledge in humans at birth. The phrase, *Allah has brought you forth from the bellies of your mothers*, refers to birth, and *while you did not know anything*, is a condition of the pronoun "your", meaning you were born from your mothers' wombs without the knowledge which you later acquired through senses, imagination, and intellect.

This verse supports the view of psychologists that the human psyche is initially like a blank slate, which gradually acquires imprints over time. However, this pertains to human knowledge about things other than themselves. Mystics do not consider self-awareness as "knowing something",

supported by the Qur'anic statement in previous verses about those reaching *the nethermost age*, *so that he knows nothing after some knowledge* (16:70). It is evident that such individuals still possess self-awareness; aging does not lead to self-ignorance.

One commentator has argued using the generality of the verse to claim that presential knowledge, by which he means awareness of oneself in this instance, is like other forms of knowledge, not present in humans at birth but developing later. This challenges the philosophical argument that self-awareness is neither acquired nor imprinted.

In response to this commentator's view, we say: The general meaning of the verse refers to knowledge in the usual sense, meaning acquired knowledge, supported by the verse we previously mentioned. And the phrase, *He made for you hearing, eyesight, and hearts* (af'ida) *so that you may give thanks*, points to the origins of this knowledge that God has bestowed upon humans. Since the primary sources of all perceptions are the external senses, predominantly the sense of sight and hearing. Other senses like touch, taste, and smell do not match the importance of these two. The origin of belief and thought is the heart.

أَلَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَى الطَّيْرِ مُسَخَّرَاتٍ فِي جَوِّ السَّمَاءِ مَا يُمْسِكُهُنَّ إِلاَّ اللَّهُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٧٩﴾

(16:79) Have they not regarded the birds disposed (*musakhkharāt*) in the air of the sky (*jaww al-samā'*): no one sustains them except Allah. There are indeed signs in that for a people who have faith.

In *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, al-Ṭabrisī writes that *jaww* ("air") refers to the air far from the Earth. Accordingly, the verse's meaning is: "Do they not see the birds that are subservient in the distant space and atmosphere of the sky? Then, the result of observing and contemplating this is stated: *no one sustains them except Allah*."

Here, God exclusively attributes the birds' sustenance in the air to Himself, even though we observe natural causes affecting their flight. However, we also know that God in His majestic speech has affirmed the principle of cause and effect, accepting the causality of natural causes. So how is it that in the matter of birds' flight, He denies it?

This is the question that appears to arise in the present verse, but it

should be understood that the birds' suspension in the air, by any means, and relying on any cause, are ultimately dependent on God and His creation. He is the one who has granted existence to the birds, to the cause of their flight, and to the relationship between that cause and the flight. Therefore, the real cause of this existence, even if it depends on an immediate natural cause, is exclusively God. Even when the existence of a phenomenon depends on immediate, natural causes, the real cause of this existence is God alone.

When we say that its existence relies on a cause, this does not mean that the cause, after receiving its existence from God, bestows existence upon the effect independently of God. Rather, it means that the effect, in receiving its existence from God, needs its cause to have already received its existence. We have elaborated on this point in previous pages.

This is the idea of monotheism that is espoused by the Qur'an, and its linguistic evidence includes verses like: *Behold, to Him belong creation and command* (7:54), *All power belongs to Allah entirely* (2:165), *Allah is the creator of everything* (30:62), and *Indeed, Allah has power over all things* (6:77).

The evidence from the verse which demonstrates that the phrase *no one sustains them except Allah* contradicts the efficacy of natural causes, is the word *musakhkharāt* ("disposed"). Because disposal is realized when the one who disposes compels another cause to act in a manner it desires. Thus, this very word implies that the subject, in this case, embodies a form of natural causality.

The flight of birds in the sky is in reality no more extraordinary than a human standing on the Earth. Everything is equally attributable to God's creative power. What happens is that humans become accustomed to certain phenomena, having observed them since opening their eyes, leading to a dampening of their curiosity and surprise. However, when encountering something contrary to what is familiar, it is perceived as exceptional and ignites an inquisitive spirit in the person.

Humans have always observed that heavy objects gravitate toward the Earth. This perception is then challenged when they see a heavy entity like a bird defying this principle and flying in the air, seemingly unaffected by Earth's gravity. This curiosity leads to investigation and effort until the cause is understood. Such inquiry indeed yields some truth and reality, and this is why the Qur'an uses such phenomena as grounds for argumentation.

The phrase *There are indeed signs in that for a people who have faith* means that in the disposition of the birds in the sky, there are signs and evidences for people who have faith. Since birds in their air do not exhibit a single behavior to constitute one sign, they sometimes flutter, sometimes glide, sometimes move without using their wings at all, sometimes stop, sometimes hover, sometimes ascend, and sometimes descend. All these behaviors, as God says, are signs for people who believe.

وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُم مِّن بُيُوتِكُمْ سَكَنًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُم مِّن جُلُودِ الْأَنْعَامِ بُيُوتًا تَسْتَخِفُّونَهَا يَوْمَ ظَعْنِكُمْ وَيَوْمَ إِقَامَتِكُمْ وَمِنْ أَصْوَافِهَا وَأَوْبَارِهَا وَأَشْعَارِهَا أَثَاثًا وَمَتَاعًا إِلَى حِينٍ ﴿٨٠﴾

(16:80) It is Allah who has made for you your homes as a place of rest (*sakan*) and He made for you homes out of the skins of the cattle which you find portable on the day of your shifting (*ẓaʿn*) and on the day of your halt, and out of their wool (*aṣwāf*), their furs (*awbār*) and hair (*ashʿār*) furniture (*aḥthāth*) and wares (*matāʿ*) for a while.

This means that God has made homes for you out of certain skins, specifically tanned leather, which are intended as tents or portable dwellings. These are homes that you find light and easy to move and which, therefore, you use for your travels on the day of your shifting (when you are on the move) and the day of your halt (when you are not).

In his *Mufradāt*, al-Rāghib mentions that *bayt* ("home") refers to whatever shelters a person at night. The verb *bāta* is used when someone stays somewhere for a night. Similarly, the term *bayt* can also refer to a residence, and its plural can be *abyāt* or *buyūt*, though *buyūt* is more commonly used for houses and *abyāt* for verses of poetry. Additionally, al-Rāghib has stated that *bayt* applies to stone, clay, wool, and fur houses.

The term *sakan* means anything that provides a person with residence, while *ẓʿan* is the opposite, meaning to migrate or move. The term *ṣūf* (pl. *awṣāf*) refers to sheep's wool, *wabar* (pl. *awbār*) to camel's hair, *shaʿr* (pl. ashʿār) to human hair as well as goat's hair, and *aḥthāth* refers to abundant household goods, not used for a single piece of household item. In *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, it is said that *aḥthāth* has no singular form, much like *matāʿ*,

which is more general and refers to all necessities of life, even if they are not related to the house. This indicates that God has provided various types of homes and materials for making them, demonstrating His providence and care in facilitating human life.

The phrase *and out of their wool, their furs, and their hair* is an extension of the mention of their skins, meaning "God has made for you from their wool'"—referring to sheep, "and their furs"—referring to camels, "and their hair"—referring to goats, "furnishings and wares" for use in your homes, which you benefit from "for a while." Some have said that this limited duration hints at the transience of these blessings, reminding the wise not to lose the eternal joys of the hereafter for these perishable comforts.

وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُم مِّمَّا خَلَقَ ظِلالاً وَجَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنَ الْجِبَالِ أَكْنَانًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ سَرَابِيلَ تَقِيكُمُ الْحَرَّ وَسَرَابِيلَ تَقِيكُم بَأْسَكُمْ كَذَلِكَ يُتِمُّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُسْلِمُونَ ﴿٨١﴾

(16:81) It is Allah who has made for you shade from what He created, and made for you retreats in the mountains, and made for you garments that protect you from heat and garments that protect you from your violence. That is how He completes His blessing upon you so that you may submit.

The two adverbs, namely "for you" and "from what He created", are related to the creation of shades. The reason for linking shades to "what He created" is because shade itself is an absence and cannot be created except as a secondary effect of something else. Despite being an absence, its consequential existence is a significant blessing from God for humans, animals, and even plants. Its benefit is no less than that of light, for without shade—be it the night's, trees', or plants'—no living creature could survive on Earth.

... and made for you retreats (aknān) *in the mountains*—The word *kann* means something that covers another thing, so even a garment is a *kann* for the person wearing it. The intended meaning here is the caves and hollows in the mountains.

... and made for you garments that protect you from heat—These garments are intended to shield you from heat. In *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*,

al-Ṭabrisī states that if only protection from heat is mentioned and not from cold, it is because anything that protects a person from heat can also protect from cold. The specific mention of heat, despite garments being more effective against the cold, is because the primary audience in the hot climate of the Hijaz had a greater need for protection from heat than from cold, as narrated from ʿAtā'.

He adds that Arabs, when speaking of two inseparable things, often mention only one because the other is understood by implication. For instance, a poet has said: "I do not know when I set out for a land, seeking good, which of the two will meet me." This refers to good and evil; since he has mentioned 'good', he felt no need to mention the other, as quoted from al-Farrā'.

Another possible reason for specifying protection from heat and not mentioning cold could be that humanity first lived in warmer regions of the earth, dealing more with intense heat than cold. Therefore, this group is reminded to adopt clothing, a precaution against the adverse climate they encounter, which in this case is extreme heat.

and garments (sarābīl) *that protect you from your violence*—Apparently, these *sarābīl* that protect from the harm of war are likely armors made from iron and similar materials.

That is how He completes His blessing upon you so that you may submit—In this phrase, He reminds them of the completion of His blessings, intending that in return for these bounties, they should submit to Him, recognizing that their benefactor has not fallen short in bestowing favors. Nothing less than submission to the will of the benefactor and refraining from arrogance is expected, knowing that the benefactor only intends their good.

فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلاغُ الْمُبِينُ ﴿٨٢﴾

(16:82) But if they turn their backs, your duty is only to communicate in clear terms (*al-balāgh al-mubīn*)

In *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, it is stated that *balāgh* is a noun and *tablīgh* is the verbal noun, akin to *kalām* ("speech") and *taklīm* ("speaking").

After God Almighty finishes enumerating the blessings He intended to mention and concludes His argument with them, He ends the discussion

with this phrase, delivering a reproach and a threat toward the disbelievers. It implies the doctrine of monotheism in lordship, as well as prophethood and resurrection. First, it clarifies the role and duty of prophethood and the Prophet's responsibility in his mission, which is to deliver a clear message. It says: *But if they turn their backs*—if they deviate, implying that the call is only for their worldly and afterlife welfare, with no coercion involved. Hence, if they turn away and refuse to accept it, showing aversion and reluctance, *your duty is only to communicate in clear terms*—your only responsibility is to convey the message clearly, without ambiguity or hidden meanings, as you are a messenger of God and a messenger has no duty beyond this.

In addition to outlining the Prophet's duty, this verse also provides consolation and solace to him.

يَعْرِفُونَ نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُنكِرُونَهَا وَأَكْثَرُهُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿٨٣﴾

(16:83) They recognize (*ya'rifūn*) the blessing of Allah and then deny it (*yunkirūn*), and most of them are the faithless

Ma'rifa ("recognition") is the opposite of denial (*inkār*), similar to knowledge (*'ilm*) being contrary to ignorance (*jahl*). This itself is evidence that the intended meaning of *inkār* ("denial") is essentially a practical denial, meaning not believing in God, His Messenger, and the Day of Judgment, or verbally denying these doctrines while having prior knowledge of them. Both interpretations are plausible, but since the phrase (and most of them are disbelievers) restricts the denial to most of them, it should primarily mean the former interpretation.

In the phrase, *and most of them are the faithless*, the word "faithless" has the definite article, which indicates that the aforementioned disbelievers completely denied God's blessings, or the truth of the Qur'an and the monotheism to which these blessings point, or disbelief in monotheism and more. This is because the phrase, *and most of them are the faithless*, implies that most of them are fully entrenched in their disbelief. In addition to their disbelief and denial, they were also obstinate and obstructive toward God's path.

It means that they recognized God's favor as being from Him, and this recognition should have led them to believe in Him, His Messenger,

and the Day of Judgment, and to submit to Him in practice. Contrarily, when it comes to action, they behave in a way that suggests denial, not what their recognition should entail. Most of them did not just stop at practical denial but added disbelief, obstinacy against the truth, denial, and persistence in it.

The explanation we prefer for the phrase, *and most of them are the faithless*, is sufficient, and the lengthy and the explanations given by other commentators are excessive.

One commentator has said that if the verse refers to most of them as faithless, even though all of them were disbelievers, it is because a minority among them might not have had the argument fully established against them, or they were not of age or mentally sound, or they had not heard the Prophet's call. Obviously, such individuals cannot be labeled as disbelievers.

However, those individuals are entirely outside the scope of the verse because it rebukes and warns that they deny God's blessings after having recognized them. If they do deny these blessings, they are indeed disbelievers, but if they do not, they certainly do not fall under the general statement of the verse. Moreover, how can it be accurate to claim that the argument has not been established against them, when the only argument is the blessing itself, which God Almighty counts and they recognize?

Regarding the phrase "But most of them are disbelievers," some argue that it was used because God knew that some among them would eventually believe. However, this interpretation lacks evidence.

Another view suggests that "most" actually means "all" and was used instead of "some" out of disdain for even mentioning the rest. This opinion is attributed to Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and is quite unusual.

Some have said that this verse invalidates the claim of Determinists that God bestows no favors on disbelievers and that everything He does for them is merely abandonment and punishment. God Himself contradicts this view in this verse.

The truth is that the concept of blessing has two aspects: one is the blessing as something pleasant and suitable for the recipient's condition in the path of creation, concerning their physical well-being. The other aspect is related to the recipient's condition in the path of legislation, concerning their spiritual and human happiness. This is where the blessing should lead to their recognition of God, His messenger, and the Hereafter, and its use

in a manner pleasing to God. A believer enjoys both types of blessings, while a disbeliever in this world only enjoys the first type and is deprived of the second. This concept is supported by many references in God's speech.

وَيَوْمَ نَبْعَثُ مِن كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ شَهِيدًا ثُمَّ لاَ يُؤْذَنُ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ وَلاَ هُمْ يُسْتَعْتَبُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾

(16:84) And on the day when We raise up a witness out of every nation, then permission shall not be granted to those who disbelieve, nor shall they be allowed to make amends (*yusta'tabūn*).

In *Majma' al-Bayān*, it is narrated from Zajjāj that *'atab* means anger and sorrow. When it is said, "So-and-so has *'atab* against someone," it means they are grieved by them. If they reconcile and seek to please them, it is said *a'taba*, and the noun for this root is *'atbiya*, meaning the return of the wrongdoer to something that pleases the aggrieved party. The verb *isti'tāb* means they are asked to make amends.

The phrase *And on the day when We raise up a witness out of every nation* implies, from its context, that it refers to the Day of Judgment. The witnesses whom God raises from each nation are witnesses to the deeds, who have recorded the realities of their nation's actions. They will testify on that day. We have discussed the meaning of this testimony in the interpretation of the verse, *So that you are witnesses over mankind, and the Messenger is a witness over you* (2:143) previously.

There is nothing in the text of the verse to indicate that the witness of each nation refers to its prophet, nor does it suggest that the *umma* refers to the prophet's community. It is also plausible that the witness might be someone other than the prophet, like an Imam, as suggested by the verse in Sūrah al-Baqarah and the verse *And the prophets and witnesses are brought* (39:69). Therefore, *of every nation*, could refer to the community and the people of the time of each resurrected witness.

In the phrase, *then permission shall not be granted to those who disbelieve*, the mention of raising a witness from each nation suggests that these witnesses and testifiers will testify against their own communities regarding their actions in the world. It also implies that the disbelievers will not be allowed to speak or make excuses, so as to provide an opportunity for the witnesses to testify uninterrupted. Essentially, the community is silenced

so that the witnesses can give their testimony, as indicated in other verses like *Today We seal their mouths, and their hands speak to Us and their feet bear witness* (36:65), and *This is a day when they will not speak, nor will it be permitted for them to make excuses* (77:36).

Furthermore, the context of the discussed phrase suggest that the intended meaning is that the disbelievers are not allowed to use words and tricks to ward off the evil of the Day of Judgment. It conveys that there is no way for them to rectify what has been missed and to correct what has been corrupted in their worldly deeds. This rectification and correction necessarily follow one of two paths: either through seeking forgiveness or being granted permission to return and start anew with righteous deeds. The second path is closed off by the phrase, *nor shall they be allowed to make amends*, and the first path, which is seeking forgiveness, is blocked by *then permission shall not be granted to those who disbelieve*.

From this, it is clear that the meaning of *nor shall they be allowed to make amends* is that they are not asked to come forth to please God and make Him content with them. This statement denotes the impossibility of rectifying the past. It indicates that it is impossible for them to return and obey again because the Day of Judgment is for recompense and punishment, not for action, and there is no path to return to earthly life to engage in righteous deeds.

God Almighty has clarified this in other places in His speech with different words. For instance, He says: *On the Day when the shin will be uncovered and they will be called to bow in prostration, but they will not be able, their eyes humbled, covered in disgrace. And they had been called to prostrate while they were sound* (68:43), and His saying: *And if only you could see when the criminals hang their heads before their Lord, "Our Lord, we have seen and heard, so return us; we will do righteous deeds. Indeed, we are now certain"* (32:12).

وَإِذَا رَأَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُواْ الْعَذَابَ فَلاَ يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمْ وَلاَ هُمْ يُنظَرُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾

(16:85) And when the wrongdoers sight the punishment, it shall not be lightened for them, nor will they be granted any respite.

The previous verse essentially differentiated between the Day of Recompense, that is, the Day of Judgment, and other situations of

recompense in the world. It was stated that the recompense on the Day of Judgment does not change with apologies or atonement requests, as is the case with worldly recompenses. However, this verse highlights the difference between the punishment of that day and the worldly punishments that befall oppressors. Earthly punishments can be mitigated and postponed, but the punishment of the Day of Judgment is neither lessened nor delayed.

The statement, *And when the wrongdoers sight the punishment*, and not referring to *those who disbelieved*, aims to point out the reason and basis for the judgment. As inferred from the context, the mention of seeing the punishment after the reckoning indicates the awareness of the punishment by the wrongdoers and their approach to it after the accounting. The intended punishment here, as suggested by the context, is the torment of the Day of Judgment, which is essentially punishment by fire.

The verse means that once their accounting is completed, and the decree of punishment is issued, and they are brought close to the fire and witness it, there is no escape for them. There is neither any reduction in their punishment nor any delay granted.

وَإِذَا رَأَى الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُواْ شُرَكَاءَهُمْ قَالُواْ رَبَّنَا هَؤُلاء شُرَكَاؤُنَا الَّذِينَ كُنَّا نَدْعُوْ مِن دُونِكَ فَأَلْقَوْا إِلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلَ إِنَّكُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ ﴿٨٦﴾

(16:86) When the polytheists (*alladhīna ashrakū*) sight their partners, they will say, 'Our Lord! These are our partners whom we used to invoke besides You.' But they will retort to them, 'You are indeed liars!'

This verse continues the narrative of the Day of Judgment. In the Qur'anic context, *alladhīna ashrakū* (lit. "those who associated") typically refers to idolaters and polytheists. This itself is a clue that "their partners" refers to those entities they falsely attributed as partners to God. The subsequent verse also supports this interpretation.

The phrase "their partners" is used rather than "God's partners" to indicate that these idols and false gods do not actually share any real association with God. They only possess the partnership that these polytheists have falsely attributed to them, which, in reality, holds no truth.

With this explanation, it becomes clear that interpreting "their

partners" as idols or other false deities, or the notion that idols were financial partners with the idolaters since a portion of their wealth and livestock was dedicated to them, as well as the interpretation that these partners were devils sharing in their wealth, offspring, disbelief, or the consequences of their disbelief, are not accurate interpretations. Since we do not have the opportunity to debate each of these interpretations, we will move on.

... they will say, 'Our Lord! These are our partners whom we used to invoke besides You.'—The meaning of this sentence is clear; it seeks to introduce the polytheists' partners to their Lord. There is no need to discuss why polytheists would identify their gods on the Day of Judgment, as that day is one of misery and torment from every direction. In such a state, a person grasps at whatever comes to mind, making any effort they can to save themselves.

But they will retort to them **(alqaw ilay-him al-qawl)*, 'You are indeed liars!'***—In *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, al-Ṭabrisī says that when you say: "I threw something" (*alqaytu al-shay'*) it means to throw it far away, and *al-laqī* refers to something thrown far off. *Alqaytu ilayhi al-qawl* means I directed my speech toward him, and *talaqqā-hā* means to accept it. The meaning of the sentence is that their partners will reject their words and call them liars. God, in other places, has referred to this denial as disbelief, as in the verse *And on the Day of Resurrection, they will disbelieve in your associating them* (35:14) and similarly in *Indeed, I have disbelieved in what you associated before* (14:22), which relates Satan's words to the polytheists on the Day of Judgment.

وَأَلْقَوْا إِلَى اللَّهِ يَوْمَئِذٍ السَّلَمَ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُم مَّا كَانُوا۟ يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿٨٧﴾

(16:87) They will submit to Allah on that day (*alqaw ilā Allāh yawma-idhin al-salam*), and what they used to fabricate will forsake them.

The word *salam* means submission or surrender. It seems that the use of the term *alqaw ilā Allāh yawma-idhin al-salam* ("They will submit to God on that day") is intended to suggest that, in addition to submission and humility, they will also be compelled to surrender to God's power.

The pronoun "They" in *They will submit* refers to those who associated others with God, as indicated by the subsequent phrase, *and what*

they used to fabricate will forsake them. It means that the polytheists will submit to God on the Day of Judgment, despite their arrogance toward the call to Islam in this world.

This submission on the Day of Judgment is not merely the revelation of truth and the manifestation of God's oneness, as is implied in the description of the Day of Judgment: *And they will know that Allah is the manifest truth* (24:25). Knowing that something exists is one thing, but submitting and believing in its existence is another, as evident from *And they denied it, though their souls were certain of it* (27:14).

Merely knowing that God is the absolute truth is not sufficient for human happiness; it also requires submission and faith in Him, along with its consequences. There is a submission and faith that comes voluntarily and from choice, and there is that which comes from compulsion and distress. What benefits a person in achieving happiness is submission and faith by choice, and the place for choice is this world, the abode of action, unlike the hereafter, which is the abode of recompense.

They did not submit to the truth while in this world, even though they were certain of it. When they reached the hereafter and were presented at the place of reckoning, they witnessed that *Allah* is the manifest truth and that the torment of misery surrounded them from all sides. They then submitted to the truth out of compulsion, but it was of no benefit to them. This forced knowledge and submission are referred to in *On that day, Allah will pay them their just due, and they will know that Allah is the manifest truth* (24:25). The beginning of the verse speaks of their submission because it is the true religion, as stated in *Indeed, the religion with Allah is submission* (3:19), and the end of the verse speaks of the revelation of truth to them and the manifestation of reality.

The verse under discussion, *They will submit to Allah on that day, and what they used to fabricate will forsake them,* its first part hints at their submission and its end indicates that this submission is out of compulsion and will not benefit them. They used to believe in the divinity of God and their associates, preferring the submission and worship of their associates over submission to God. When the truth became apparent to them on the Day of Judgment and their associates denied them, what they claimed was invalidated and vanished, leaving only God Almighty, to whom they submitted reluctantly and under compulsion.

الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ وَصَدُّواْ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ زِدْنَاهُمْ عَذَابًا فَوْقَ الْعَذَابِ بِمَا كَانُواْ يُفْسِدُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾

(16:88) Those who are faithless and bar from the way of Allah—We shall add punishment (*al-adhāb*) to their punishment because of the corruption they used to cause.

This verse again specifically addresses the situation of the leaders of disbelief, following the mention of the general state of all oppressors and polytheists in the previous verses.

When the listener hears what God has described about their state on the Day of Judgment in these verses, where they are all punished without any relief or postponement, and has heard that among them is a group who are more disbelieving and wretched than others, as indicated by "And most of them are disbelievers," it naturally raises the question whether they will suffer the same punishment as others, given that their cause, disbelief, is more severe.

To answer this, the discourse is resumed: *Those who disbelieved and obstructed the way of Allah* through stubbornness and obstinacy, thereby completing their disbelief and leading others to follow them, will receive an additional punishment specifically for obstructing the path of God, in addition to the punishment common to all oppressors and disbelievers. The definite article in "punishment" (*al-adhāb*) refers back to what was mentioned in *And when the wrongdoers sight the punishment*, explaining the reason for the increased punishment.

Thus, the "corruption" referred to here is primarily the act of preventing others from following the way of God. According to another explanation, it is the corruption caused on Earth by their preventing the establishment of a righteous society that would have emerged had those diverted individuals embraced God's religion and followed His path.

وَيَوْمَ نَبْعَثُ فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ شَهِيدًا عَلَيْهِم مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَجِئْنَا بِكَ شَهِيدًا عَلَى هَؤُلاء وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ تِبْيَانًا لِّكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً وَبُشْرَى لِلْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٨٩﴾

(16:89) The day We raise in every nation a witness against them

from among themselves, We shall bring you as a witness against these. We have sent down the Book to you as a clarification of all things and as a guidance and mercy and good news for those who submit.

This is a repetition of a similar phrase a few verses earlier, but with different contexts. Earlier, it served as a prelude to the discussion about the disbeliever's inability to speak on that Day, while here it provides a prelude to the mention of the Prophet's testimony against them. In both contexts, the phrase serves a purpose beyond itself.

This verse indicates that a single individual will be resurrected in each nation to testify against others' deeds. This resurrection for testimony is different from the resurrection for accountability. The witness is from among the people themselves, ensuring a more conclusive argument and leaving no room for excuses. Commentators, noting instances like Prophet Lot's testimony against his people, despite not being related to them, explained it by his association and residence with them, counting him as one of them.

The phrase, *We shall bring you as a witness against these*, implies that the Prophet Muḥammad is a witness against his own people. Scholars have inferred that "these" refers to his nation and all of humanity to whom he was sent, from his era to the Day of Judgment. This includes his contemporaries and those who came after, both present and absent. Everyone falls within his nation, and he is a witness over them all. The verses about his testimony are among the most complex and challenging aspects of the Qur'anic verses related to the Day of Judgment. In fact, all verses pertaining to the Day of Judgment contain complexities and challenges, and the concept of testimony has been discussed in the context of the verse *That you be witnesses over mankind and the Messenger be a witness over you* (2:143).

Before delving into the topic of testimony and other matters described for the Day of Judgment, such as the gathering, standing, questioning, the scale, and the reckoning, it is essential to understand that these are presented in God's discourse as evidences established against humanity on that Day. They serve to confirm each person's deeds, whether good or evil, and to make a final judgment, leading to either happiness or misery, paradise or hell. This is a clear inference from the verses of the Qur'an that describe the events and scenarios of that Day.

This principle necessitates that there be a real and clear relationship

between these evidences, their components, and their outcomes so that the intellect is compelled to acknowledge and accept them, leaving no room for any person with common sense to refute or doubt them.

Therefore, the testimony established by God must inherently contain undeniable truth. Even if God commanded the most wretched person to testify against everyone, from the earliest to the latest, whether through the witness's own volition or God creating the testimony without the witness's intent, or even if God made the witness testify without having directly experienced or observed these deeds but rather based on divine information or angelic instruction, it would not exceed His omnipotence or the scope of His will. No one could dispute His sovereignty, counter His judgment, or overpower His decree.

However, such a testimony, if based on compulsion or fabrication, would not be a perfect piece of evidence, as it would not conclusively refute excuses or dispel doubts. It would be akin to the arbitrary judgments found among human tyrants, far removed from truth and reality. How can such contrived piece of evidence have any validity on a Day when only truth and reality will prevail?

Thus, it is imperative that this witness on the Day of Judgement be divinely protected from falsehood and have no need to resort to guesswork, fully aware of the true nature of the actions to which they are testifying, not just in the sense of their outward physical forms but also their actual significance as conceived in the hearts. The witness should treat those present and absent equally, as previously mentioned in the interpretation of the verse from Sūrah Al-Baqarah.

It is also necessary that their testimony be based on direct observation, as the apparent meaning of the term "witness" suggests. This is also evident from the phrase "from among themselves" in the verse under discussion, indicating that the testimony should not rely on rational or transmitted evidence but on direct observation and sensory perception. This is supported by the account of Jesus in the Qur'an, which states: *I was a witness over them as long as I was among them, but when You took me up, You were the Watcher over them, and You are Witness to all things* (5:117). This explanation harmonizes the content of the two verses, as one says: *And the day We will raise in every nation a witness against them from themselves, and We bring you* (Muḥammad) *as a witness against these* (16:89), and the other

states: *Thus We have made you a just community that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you* (2:143).

The apparent meaning of the verse in al-Baqarah is that between Prophet Muḥammad and the people he was sent to—all humanity from his time until the Day of Judgment—there are witnesses who testify about their deeds, and Prophet Muḥammad is a witness over these witnesses, with his testimony about the deeds of other people being through these witnesses.

It cannot be assumed that the "just community" refers only to believers and "the people" to the rest of humanity, as the previous verse in the same Surah states: *And the day We will raise from every nation a witness, then it will not be permitted to those who disbelieve...* (16:89), suggesting that even the disbelievers are part of the witnessed community.

This implies that the word "nation" in the verse under discussion refers to the community of a particular era, witnessed by one of their own. By this account, the "nation" to which Prophet Muḥammad was sent is divided into many communities.

Consequently, the "witness" must be someone endowed with divine infallibility and sent to observe his people, as previously mentioned. The phrase "from among themselves" supports this, as without direct observation, the phrase would lose its significance. There is no necessity for multiple witnesses, so each community should have their own witness, whether that witness is their prophet or someone else. There is no correlation between being a witness and being a prophet, as also indicated by the verse: *And (He will bring forth) the prophets and the witnesses...* (39:69).

Therefore, based on this explanation, the term "these" in the verse *We shall bring you as a witness against these*, refers to the witnesses, not the general population. Thus, the witnesses are those who testify about the people, and the Prophet Muḥammad is a witness over these witnesses. The apparent nature of witnessing over a witness is to verify them, not to observe their deeds. Hence, the Prophet is a witness over the status of these witnesses, not their actions. This means it is not necessary for the Prophet to be contemporaneous with all these witnesses or to be united with them in time, so reflect.

Frankly, if this interpretation is not applied to the verse, the discrepancy and conflict among the verses regarding witnessing on the Day of

Resurrection remain unresolved. For instance, the verse in Sūrah al-Baqarah and the verse, *So that the Messenger will be a witness over you, and you will be witnesses over the people* (22:78), suggests that "nation" in the present verse refers to the believers, whereas other verses imply that the term "nation" includes all people of an era. The two verses cited from al-Baqarah indicate that Prophet Muḥammad is a witness over other witnesses, implying that other witnesses stand between him and the people. In contrast, other verses suggest that each people are assigned a single witness, their prophet, which renders the phrase "from among themselves" redundant, as the prophet of each people is not always contemporaneous with them, and the witnessing is not of the living. This leads to several other complications.

We have sent down the Book to you as a clarification (tibyān) ***of all things and as a guidance and mercy and good news for those who submit***—This passage is considered an independent statement unrelated to its predecessor in the verse; it describes the Qur'an with its distinctive attributes. One general attribute is that it is a "clarification of all things." *Tibyān*, as stated, means "clarification." Since the Qur'an is a book of guidance for all people, serving no other purpose, "of all things" apparently refers to all matters related to guidance, such as true knowledge about the origin and end of the cosmos, virtuous ethics, divine laws, pious stories, and the moral admonitions necessary for people's guidance. The Qur'an clarifies all of these (not implying it clarifies all fields of human knowledge). A specific attribute related to Muslims, who have agreed to submit to the truth, is that it is guidance leading them to the straight path, mercy from God guiding them to worldly and heavenly goodness, and leading to God's reward and approval, and good news promising them forgiveness, divine satisfaction, and eternal bliss in God's paradises.

This is what the commentators have said about this verse, and it holds true if the intended meaning of the word *tibyān* is the usual and customary expression, namely, conveying intentions through speech and lexical meanings. The Qur'an, through its lexical signification, does not go beyond what has been mentioned. However, in some traditions, it is stated that the Qur'an is the *tibyān* of everything, encompassing knowledge of what was, what is, and what will be until the Day of Judgment. If these traditions are correct, it implies that *tibyān* is broader than just the lexical meaning of its words. Of course, it is not far-fetched that the Qur'an contains indications

and matters revealing secrets and hidden truths that ordinary and conventional understanding cannot grasp.

It appears, from the context of these verses that argue for the three fundamental principles of monotheism, prophethood, and resurrection, that the phrase *We have sent down the Book* is not a new statement. Rather, it is a circumstantial clause related to the pronoun in *We shall bring you as a witness*. However, *We shall bring you as a witness* begins with the perfect tense verb *ji'na*, and there is a disagreement among grammarians about the circumstantial clause beginning with a perfect tense verb. Therefore, some say there is an implicit *qad* before *ji'na*, which would render it past perfect (that is, "We will have brought you as a witness").

Therefore, the meaning is: "And We have made you, Muḥammad, a witness over these people, while We had already revealed to you the Book in the world as an explanation for everything regarding guidance. It distinguishes truth from falsehood so that you bear the responsibility of witnessing their deeds and thus testify on the Day of Judgment against the oppressors for their oppression, and for the Muslims for their submission, because the Book was a guidance, a mercy, and good news for them, and you were by virtue of that a guide, a mercy, and a bearer of glad tidings for them."

Thus, the beginning of the verse serves as a prelude to its end. Is is as if to say: "Witnesses will be brought to testify against people for their deeds, and you are among them. Therefore, We revealed to you a Book that clarifies truth and falsehood and distinguishes between them, so you may testify on the Day of Judgment against the oppressors for their oppression, as the Book has clarified, and for the Muslims for their submission, as the Book was guidance, mercy, and good news for them, and you were a guide, a mercy, and a bearer of glad tidings for them."

A subtle point supporting this reading of the verb is the association of the Book with testimony in some of the verses about testimony, such as the verse: *And the earth will shine with the light of its Lord, and the Book will be set in place, and the prophets and the witnesses will be brought* (39:69). It will be shown, God willing, that the reference here is to the Preserved Tablet, and it has been repeatedly mentioned in God's discourse that the Qur'an is a part of the Preserved Tablet, as stated in: *Indeed, it is a noble Qur'an in a hidden Book* (56:78), and *But it is actually a glorious Qur'an*

in a Preserved Tablet (85:22).

The testimony of the Preserved Tablet, although different from the testimony of the Prophet Muḥammad, both ultimately depend on the decree of the revealed Book.

Examining Narrations

(1) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, al-Suyūṭī relates that Ibn Abī Ḥātim narrated from Mujāhid that: "A Bedouin came to the Prophet and asked for something. The Prophet recited to him the verse: *It is Allah who has made for you your homes as a place of rest* (16:80). The Bedouin said, 'Yes.' The Prophet continued to recite, and the Bedouin affirmed each time until they reached the verse: *That is how He completes His blessing upon you so that you may submit* (16:81). Upon hearing this, the Bedouin turned his back and left. Consequently, the following verse was revealed: *They recognize the blessing of Allah and then deny it, and most of them are faithless* (16:83).

(2) In *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, it is narrated from Ibn Shahr Āshūb from Imam al-Bāqir regarding the verse: *They recognize the blessing of Allah and then deny it* (16:83). He said: "They were made aware of and commanded to follow ʿAlī's guardianship (*wilāyah*), but after his passing, they denied it."

Author's comment: This narration is an example of applying a specific instance to a general principle, suggesting that Ali's guardianship was one of God's favors that was recognized and then denied.

(3) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is narrated from Jaʿfar b. Aḥmad, from al-Tarkī al-Nīshābūrī, from ʿAlī b. Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad, from his brother Musa b. Jaʿfar that when asked about this verse (16:83), he said: "They recognized that favor and then denied it."

(4) In *Tafsīr Al-Qummī*, concerning the verse, *The day We raise in every nation a witness against them from among themselves* (16:89), it is narrated from Imam al-Ṣādiq: "For every era and nation there is a witness, and every nation will be resurrected with its Imam."

Author's comment: This aligns with the verse *On the day when We will call every people with their Imam* (17:71).

(5) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is reported by ʿAbd b. Ḥumayd, Ibn

Jarīr, Ibn Mundhir, and Ibn Abī Ḥātim from Qatāda: "God stated: *We shall bring you as a witness against these* (16:89), and it is narrated that whenever the Prophet Muḥammad recited this verse, his eyes would overflow with tears."

There are many such narrations about the testimony on the Day of Resurrection. Some of them are mentioned, concerning the verse, *And thus We have made you a just community...* (2:143), and others under, *And We have brought you, as a witness over your nation...* (2:143) and the verse, *And on the Day of Resurrection, he will be a witness against them* (4:41).

(6) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is reported that Ibn Mardawayh and al-Khaṭīb in the book *Tālī al-Talkhīṣ*, who narrate from al-Barrā' that someone asked the Prophet Muḥammad about the verse: *We will increase them in punishment over punishment* (16:88). The Prophet replied: "These are scorpions resembling tall date palms that will sting them in Hell."

The following narrations discuss the meaning of the Qur'an being a clarification of all things (16:89):

(7) In *al-Kāfī*, it is narrated from ʿAbd al-Aʿlā b. Aʿyan that he heard Imam al-Ṣādiq say: "We are born from the Messenger of God, and at our birth, we know the Book of God. This Book contains the beginning of creation and all that will happen until the Day of Resurrection. It includes news of the heavens and the earth, news of Paradise and Hell, and information about everything that has occurred and will occur. I know all of this as well as I see the palm of my hand because God Almighty has said: 'In this Book is the clarification of everything.'"

Author's comment: The verse is cited here in its meaning in this narration.

(8) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is narrated from Manṣūr from Ḥammād al-Laḥḥām that he said: Imam al-Ṣādiq stated: "We know what is in the heavens and what is on the earth, what is in Paradise and what is in Hell, and everything in between." Ḥammād said: "I looked at the Imam in astonishment, and he said: 'Oh Hammad, this is indeed in the Book of God Almighty.' Then he recited this verse: *The day We raise in every nation a witness against them from among themselves, We shall bring you as a witness against these.*

We have sent down the Book to you as a clarification of all things and as a guidance and mercy and good news for those who submit (16:89). All that we have said is in a Book that is a clarification of everything."

(9) In *al-Kāfī*, it is narrated from a group of our companions, the Shīʿa, including Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Sinān, Yūnus b. Yaʿqūb, Ḥārith b. Mughīrah, and others such as ʿAbd al-Aʿlā, Abū ʿUbaydah, and ʿAbdullah b. Bashīr al-Khathʿamī, who all said: "We heard from Imam al-Ṣādiq who stated: 'I indeed know what is in the heavens and what is on the earth. I know what is in Paradise and what is in the Hellfire. I know what has happened until now and what will happen until the Day of Resurrection.' Then he paused for a moment, realizing the listeners were amazed and found it hard to believe. He said, 'I know all of these from the Book of God, the Almighty, because God Almighty says about His Book: It is a clarification of all things.'"

(10) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is narrated from ʿAbdullah b. Walid who said: "Imam al-Ṣādiq stated: 'God Almighty said about Moses: *And We wrote for him on the tablets of all things* (7:145), and we understand that not everything was written for Moses, but rather a portion of all things. And about Jesus, it is said: *That I may make clear to you some of that over which you differ* (3:50). And regarding Muḥammad, it is said: *The day We raise in every nation a witness against them from among themselves, We shall bring you as a witness against these* (16:89)."

Author's comment: This narration has also been reported by al-ʿAyyāshī with his own chain of narrators from Imam al-Ṣādiq.

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Verses 90-105

The verses mention several rulings which apply to the state of the Muslims before the Emigration to Medina, but which are also applicable to society in general. These include the commandment to uphold justice, benevolence, and the prohibition on indecency, wrongdoing, and aggression. To this is attached a command to do good to one's relatives and a prohibition on breaking one's oaths and pledges, and other issues relevant to that are also mentioned.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاء ذِى الْقُرْبَى وَيَنْهَى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاء وَالْمُنكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٩٠﴾

(16:90) Indeed Allah enjoins justice and kindness and generosity towards relatives, and He forbids indecency, wrong, and aggression. He advises you, so that you may take admonition.

God Almighty begins with these three pivotal rulings—justice, benevolence, and giving to relatives—which are crucial for the core of human society. Since the general well-being of society is a primary goal in Islamic teachings, the individual's happiness depends on the social environment they live in. It is difficult for an individual to prosper in a corrupt society surrounded by misery.

Thus, Islam emphasizes societal reform in a way that is unmatched by any other religion, exerting utmost effort in establishing its doctrines and laws as social realities, even making acts of worship like prayer, pilgrimage, and fasting community-oriented. All these efforts aim to improve individuals and their living circumstances.

Indeed Allah enjoins justice (ʿadl)—the term *ʿadl* refers to the act of fairness, which is the opposite of oppression.

As al-Rāghib explains in *al-Mufradāt*: "Justice (*ʿadālah*) and fairness (*muʿālada*) are terms implying balance and equivalence and are used considering the context. *ʿAdl* is used for matters perceived intellectually, like judgements. On the other hand, *ʿidl* and *ʿadīl* are used for tangible

things like weights and measures. Thus, *ʿadl* refers to the distribution of rights equally.

There are two types of justice: Absolute, recognized as good by reason, always applicable, and not described as wrongdoing in any context, like returning good for good and refraining from harming those who do not harm you. The second type is recognized as just by religious law and can be abrogated at times, like retribution for crimes and the laws concerning the property of turncoats. Hence, the verse, *So should anyone aggress against you, aggress against him in the manner he assailed you* (2:194), and *The requital of evil is an evil like it* (42:40) are labelled as 'aggression' and 'evil.'

The type of justice referred to in *Indeed Allah enjoins justice and kindness* is that of equivalence in recompense: if it is good, then do good in return; if evil, then do evil in return. Benevolence means repaying good with more than its worth and evil with less.

What has been explained ultimately relates to the idea that justice involves adhering to a middle path and avoiding extremes of excess and deficiency in all matters. This explanation is akin to defining something by its necessary implications, as the essence of justice lies in establishing equality and balance. In justice, each aspect receives its due, ensuring everything is put in its rightful place. Justice in belief means affirming the truth; in personal conduct, it involves doing what ensures one's well-being and avoiding what leads to misery by following selfish desires. In societal terms, justice means assigning everyone their rightful place, be it in terms of intellect, law, or social norms, rewarding the good-doer, punishing the wrongdoer, ensuring the oppressed receive justice, and impartially enforcing the law without exceptions.

This shows that justice equates to, and is inseparable from, goodness, as we understand "good" as something inherently attractive and rightly placed, universally recognized as such. Though people may differ in their perceptions of what is "good" due to varied life paths, the fundamental appreciation of "good" remains universal.

Thus, al-Rāghib's categorization of "aggression" and "evil" as forms of justice in his discourse is somewhat inaccurate. The "aggression" and "evil" used in the sense of retribution are aggressive and evil to the wrongdoer, but in the context of administering justice, they are acts of maintaining moderation and goodness, as they involve placing things in their rightful place.

However, while justice can be divided into personal and societal (or individual and communal) kinds, the term justice is general in meaning. The context of the verse implies societal justice, where each member of the community is treated fairly and assigned their rightful place. This command is societal, directed at each individual, with the implication that the community as a whole, especially the governing body, is responsible for upholding this principle of justice.

Regarding the term *iḥsān* ("kindness"), the context of the passage suggests its meaning as doing good to others, not merely performing an act well. It denotes delivering benefit or kindness to another, not as a form of reciprocation or recompense—for instance, responding to good with more and to evil with less, as previously mentioned—but rather initiating the giving of goodness voluntarily.

Iḥsān, in the sense of alleviating the plight of those brought low by poverty and adversity and spreading compassion and affection, returns praiseworthy outcomes to the benefactor himself. It results in the circulation of wealth in the community, fostering security and affection through acts of kindness.

As for the phrase, *and generosity towards relatives*, it means sharing one's wealth with relatives. This particular act of kindness is emphasized to highlight the importance of nurturing this smaller community unit, which is fundamentally instrumental in forming the larger civil society. Just as the conjugal union, the smallest unit, leads to the formation of a family, expanding through reproduction to become a tribe or clan, and eventually a great nation, the text implies that the term "relatives" (*dhū al-qurbā*) refers to the category or group rather than an individual, encompassing all relatives as noted by scholars.

In the exegetical traditions attributed to the Imāms of Ahl al-Bayt, "relatives" is interpreted as the Imām from the lineage of Prophet Muḥammad, with "generosity" referring to the allocation of *khums* as prescribed in the verse: *Know that whatever thing you may come by, a fifth of it is for Allah and the Messenger, for the relatives and the orphans, for the needy and the traveller* (8:41). We have already explained this verse elsewhere.

The singular form used in the phrase *dhū al-qurbā* rather than a plural form, which is seen in other Qur'anic instances might support this interpretation: *And when the division is attended by relatives* (ūlū al-qurbā),

the orphans and the needy, provide for them out of it, and speak to them honorable words (4:8); *... and who give their wealth, for the love of Him, to relatives* (dhawī al-qurbā)*, orphans, the needy ...* (2:177).

The likelihood of *dhū al-qurbā* signifying a general category of relatives is diminished by the context in Qur'an 8:41, where "orphans" and "the needy" are mentioned in the plural, without any discernible reason to differentiate them from "relatives" in terms of form or function.

The verse does not contain any clear indication that the meaning of *ītā'* ("generosity") here is the same as *iḥsān* ("kindness"), or that *iḥsān* means "kindness" in general.

... and He forbids indecency **(faḥshā')*****, wrong*** **(munkar)*****, and aggression*** **(baghī)*****. He advises you, so that you may take admonition:*** Al-Rāghib notes in the *Mufradāt* that *faḥshā'* refers to abhorrent and repulsive words and deeds. The original meaning of *f-ḥ-sha* likely involves exceeding the appropriate bounds in matters where it is inappropriate. For example, *ghaban fāḥish* ("gross injustice") means going beyond the bounds of tolerance, patience, and silence.

Munkar refers to acts not deemed acceptable to society, actions that are avoided due to their ugliness or sinfulness, such as sexual relations or exposing one's private parts in public, particularly in Islamic societies.

Baghī originally means to seek or demand, often used in the context of seeking someone else's rights through aggression, implying the meanings of arrogance and oppression. Sometimes, it can mean adultery, but in this verse, it refers to unjust aggression towards others.

These three—indecency, wrong, and aggression—although often overlapping in their instances (every indecency is wrong, and most acts of aggression are both indecent and wrong), the prohibition specifically addresses them by their distinct titles. In any society, actions falling under these titles distinctly separate the collective acts of its members, causing disconnection and nullifying harmony among them, thus corrupting the system and, in reality, eating away at the society from within, even if it outwardly maintains its form. This, in turn, leads to the destruction of individual happiness.

Therefore, the prohibition on indecency, wrong, and aggression essentially calls for a unified society where its members respect one another's rights and behave in a way that is conducive to their mutual harmony,

where no one acts oppressively towards another, and where only beauty, not immorality or bad conduct, is observed. In such a society, mercy, love, and harmony will prevail, establishing strength and firmness, while driving away wrath, hostility, aversion, and every negative trait leading to division and destruction.

God Almighty concludes the verse with: *He advises you, so that you may take admonition.* This means: "So that you remember and realize that what He calls you to is indeed your life and happiness."

وَأَوْفُواْ بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ إِذَا عَاهَدتُّمْ وَلاَ تَنقُضُواْ الأَيْمَانَ بَعْدَ تَوْكِيدِهَا وَقَدْ جَعَلْتُمُ اللَّهَ عَلَيْكُمْ كَفِيلاً إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٩١﴾

(16:91) Fulfil Allah's covenant ('ahd) when you pledge, and do not break oaths after pledging them solemnly and having made Allah a witness over yourselves. Indeed Allah knows what you do.

Regarding this, al-Rāghib says in the *Mufradāt*: "*'Ahd* implies the preservation and care for something over time, and a binding agreement that requires observance is termed an *'ahd*. One might say, 'So-and-so made an *'ahd* with someone', meaning he made a covenant with them and advised them to maintain it.

The phrase *Allah's covenant* suggests that the focus here is on a covenant made specifically with God, rather than any general form of agreement. This is similar to the discussion on breaking an oath.

... and do not break oaths after pledging them solemnly—breaking an oath refers to violating its terms. An "oath" here implies an agreement sworn by God. This is supported by the subsequent phrase, *and having made Allah a witness over yourselves*. The phrase *after pledging them solemnly* indicates making the oath firmly, with intention and resolution, unlike casual utterances such as "no, by God" or "yes, by God," which are considered frivolous oaths. Thus, "pledging them solemnly" here has a similar meaning to "what you pledge in earnest" in the verse from Sūrah al-Mā'ida (5:89), which differentiates between frivolous and binding oaths: *Allah shall not take you to task for what is frivolous in your oaths; but He shall take you to task for what you pledge in earnest.*

Breaking an oath is considered even more reprehensible than violating a covenant, although both are prohibited. Islamic law places greater

emphasis on oath-taking, especially in judicial matters.

The explanation of this is as follows: To make an oath means to create a special bond between a verbal statement, whether a statement or a speech act, and a matter of significant importance. The falsity of the statement, if it is a report, or the non-compliance with the speech act, indicates a degradation of the respect and honor attributed to the entity invoked when this oath was made. This turns the matter into a question of integrity and respect for the entity invoked in the oath, akin to giving a collateral of high value to someone and then failing to uphold the commitment, thereby disrespecting the collateral's worth.

This is elucidated in the phrase, *and having made Allah a witness over yourselves*, when someone swears by God to do or refrain from something, they are effectively making God a guarantor of their commitment. Breaching this oath not only signifies a failure to fulfil the promise but also disrespects the sanctity and honor of God, the guarantor. Thus, breaking an oath carries the double fault of violating the promise and dishonoring the divine sanctity, further severing the connection with God established by the oath.

The phrase, *and having made Allah*, is a circumstantial clause related to the plural pronoun in *and do not break oaths*. The subsequent statement, *Indeed Allah knows what you do*, serves to reinforce the prohibition, indicating that such actions are detested and known by Him.

وَلاَ تَكُونُواْ كَالَّتِي نَقَضَتْ غَزْلَهَا مِن بَعْدِ قُوَّةٍ أَنكَاثًا تَتَّخِذُونَ أَيْمَانَكُمْ دَخَلاً بَيْنَكُمْ أَن تَكُونَ أُمَّةٌ هِيَ أَرْبَى مِنْ أُمَّةٍ إِنَّمَا يَبْلُوكُمُ اللَّهُ بِهِ وَلَيُبَيِّنَنَّ لَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ مَا كُنتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿٩٢﴾

(16:92) Do not be like her who would undo her yarn (naqaḍat ghazla-hā ... inkāthan), breaking it up after strength, by making your oaths a means of deceit among yourselves (dakhalan baynakum), so that one community may become more affluent than another community. Allah only tests you thereby, and He will surely clarify for you on the Day of Resurrection what you used to differ about.

Naqḍ is the opposite of *ibrām* ("binding") and refers to ruining

something tightly bound, like a rope or spun yarn, so undoing a firmly established thing is like untying a knot. *Inkāth* is derived from *nakth*, with a similar meaning to *naqḍ*. In *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, al-Ṭabrisī writes that unweaving anything, whether rope or yarn, is called *inkāth*. *Dakhal* generally means for one thing to enter into another without becoming a part of it, often implying deceit or treachery.

This verse is an explanation of the previous verse about not breaking oaths, *and do not break oaths after pledging them solemnly*. It metaphorically compares such behavior to a woman who spins yarn with effort and then undoes it, rendering it useless and unstructured.

From al-Kalbī is related the account of a foolish woman of the Quraysh named Rayṭa bint ʿAmr b. Kaʿb b. Saʿd b. Tamīm b. Murra, also called "Khurqā' Makka", who would spin yarn with her maids until midday and then order it all to be undone, making this her daily routine.

The phrase *by making your oaths a means of deceit among yourselves* implies using oaths as means for betrayal and deceit, initially appeasing people with them, then betraying and deceiving them by breaking these. This is done so that one group (the oath-takers) gains more worldly benefits than the other (those sworn to). The term *dakhal* here refers to the means of accomplishing that, naming the cause after its effect. "That a nation might gain more" is an indirect object, implying the phrase serves to explain breaking oaths or being like the woman who undoes her yarn. The essence is that such actions are akin to her behavior, using oaths deceitfully, affirming them only to betray and deceive by breaking them, which God prohibits.

Some have interpreted the phrase, *making your oaths*, as a rhetorical question, omitted for emphasis, indicating disapproval.

The statement, *Allah only tests you thereby*, suggests that this situation serves as a divine test by which God examines your actions and choices. God swears to clarify for you on the Day of Judgement the matters you currently disagree on, revealing the true nature of your worldly pursuits and rejection of truth.

وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَٰكِن يُضِلُّ مَن يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي مَن
يَشَاءُ وَلَتُسْأَلُنَّ عَمَّا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾

(16:93) Had Allah wished, He would have made you one community, but He leads astray whomever He wishes and guides whomever He wishes, and you will surely be questioned concerning what you used to do.

This passage explains that the differences among people do not thwart God's purpose in creation, nor are they beyond His control. If He had wished, He could have made everyone a single community without differences. However, God chose to guide some and lead others astray, reflecting the underlying principle that human happiness and misery are based on personal choices. He made known the paths to ultimate happiness through obedience and to ultimate misery through disobedience. Those who choose disobedience and stray are recompensed accordingly by God, as are those who follow the path of obedience or repent from sin. This divine plan is unchangeable, and everyone will be questioned about their choices and actions.

The phrase, *and you will surely be questioned concerning what you used to do*, is included to dispel any misunderstanding that might arise to the effect that divine control over guidance and misguidance negates human choice or renders prophethood and the prophetic call meaningless. Instead, it affirms that human choices remain significant and answerable, as God extends to each person guidance or misguidance based on their inclination towards obeying or disobeying Him.

وَلَا تَتَّخِذُوٓا۟ أَيْمَٰنَكُمْ دَخَلًۢا بَيْنَكُمْ فَتَزِلَّ قَدَمٌۢ بَعْدَ ثُبُوتِهَا وَتَذُوقُوا۟ ٱلسُّوٓءَ بِمَا صَدَدتُّمْ عَن سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ وَلَكُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٩٤﴾

(16:94) Do not make your oaths a means of deceit among yourselves lest feet should stumble after being steady and you suffer ill for barring from the way of Allah (bi mā ṣadadtum ʿan sabīl Allāh) and there be a great punishment for you.

In his *Mufradāt*, al-Rāghib writes: "the word *ṣudūd* and *ṣadd* can mean to turn away or refrain from something, as in the verse: *the hypocrites keep away from you aversely* (yaṣuddūn ʿan-ka ṣudūdan) (4:61), or it can mean to divert or restrain another from something, as in the verse: *and Satan has made their deeds seem decorous to them—thus he has barred them*

from the way (fa-ṣadda-hum ʿan al-sabīl) (27:24).

The verse serves as a specific prohibition against using oaths deceitfully, following the general prohibition against breaking oaths. The specific harm inherent in deceitfully using oaths is the crux of the prohibition, distinct from the harm involved in breaking oaths outright. This latter harm is hinted at with the phrase, *and having made Allah a witness over yourselves* ... (16:91). In this verse, the harm of using oaths deceitfully is indicated by the words, *lest feet should stumble after being steady and you suffer ill for barring from the way of Allah and there be a great punishment for you.*

As is evident from the above, the two principles—the prohibition against breaking oaths and the prohibition against using them deceitfully—are distinct. Indeed, one can be seen as a precursor to the other, just as breaking oaths can lead to using them deceitfully. When a person breaks an oath for the first time for any reason, the act of breaking oaths becomes trivialized, paving the way for further instances of this. This turns the swearing and breaking of oaths into tools of deception and betrayal. Eventually, without realizing, one becomes habituated to deceit, betrayal, illusion, intrigue, plot, lies, and falsehood, becoming indifferent to what is said or done. This transforms a person into a seed of corruption, spoiling the human society wherever they go, deviating from the path of God, which is outlined by sound human nature.

In any case, the apparent meaning of the verse, *Do not make your oaths a means of deceit among yourselves*, is an independent prohibition against deceit through oaths, following the general prohibition in the previous verse. The phrase, *lest feet should stumble after being steady*, highlights the consequences of this prohibited act, specifically referring to the deceitful use of oaths leading to a slip after stability. The metaphor of a foot slipping after being firm represents the breaking of an oath after making a firm commitment, moving away from the stance one initially took. For a person, steadfastness and integrity in their commitments are among the noblest human qualities and the foundation of virtues, upon which divine religion is built. The preservation of oaths and their reinforcement is a step among the steps that uphold this broad principle. This is perhaps why the term *feet* is used indefinitely in the phrase, *lest feet should stumble*.

... and you suffer ill for barring from the way of Allah and there be a great punishment for you—This is linked to the previous statement,

lest feet should stumble after being steady. It elucidates the consequences of such actions, which is also a further elaboration on the warning against taking oaths deceitfully. This suggests that turning away from the path of God is akin to a deviation from the innate, natural path of truth and righteousness, which includes maintaining truthfulness, uprightness, honoring commitments, oaths, and avoiding deceit, betrayal, lies, and corruption.

Therefore, the meaning of the term *sadūd* here refers to turning away from or avoiding the natural and prophetic guidance towards truth, integrity, and commitment.

... *you suffer ill* refers to punishment. The statement, *and there be a great punishment for you*, serves as an adverbial of the subject in *you suffer ill*, possibly indicating immediate negative repercussions in this world, with the assurance of severe punishment in the hereafter. This explanation aligns with the apparent meaning of the verse.

Therefore, the meaning is: "Avoid using your oaths to deceive each other. Such actions can lead you away from your true commitments and break the solemn agreements you've made. This behavior diverts you from God's path, which is to follow your innate nature and steer clear of treachery, deceit, betrayal, and corruption. Broadly speaking, it contributes to the Earth's corruption after it has been set right. As a consequence, you will experience misery and wretchedness in this life, and in the hereafter, a severe punishment awaits you."

Some scholars have suggested that this verse specifically addresses the breaking of the allegiance pledged to Prophet Muḥammad during the early days of Islam, warning against the breach of this pledge. In this context, the term, *ṣadd* would mean preventing people from following God's religion, and, *lest feet should stumble after being steady*, could refer to apostasy after accepting Islam or straying after guidance. However, the general flow of the text does not necessarily support this specific interpretation. Even if this specific incident was the occasion of revelation, the general applicability and lessons of the verse remain valid.

وَلاَ تَشْتَرُواْ بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلاً إِنَّمَا عِندَ اللَّهِ هُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٩٥﴾

(16:95) Do not sell Allah's covenant for a paltry gain (thamanan

qalīlan). Indeed what is with Allah is better for you, should you know.

In the *Mufradāt*, al-Rāghib says that a *thaman* is whatever is given in exchange for a thing.

It appears that the verse is a prohibition against breaking a promise after the preceding command to fulfil them, emphasizing its importance, as was the case with the breaking of oaths. The verse is general in nature, and *Allah's covenant* refers to any promise made in the name of God. "Selling it for a trivial gain," in light of the verse's ending, implies exchanging a promise you have made for worldly trivialities, thereby breaking it for such gains. The exchanged item is called a price because it serves as compensation, as previously mentioned. The remainder is clear.

مَا عِندَكُمْ يَنفَدُ وَمَا عِندَ اللَّهِ بَاقٍ وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّ الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا۟ أَجْرَهُم بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا۟ يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾

(16:96) That which is with you will be spent but what is with Allah shall last, and We will surely pay the patient their reward for the best of what they used to do.

This serves as a rationale for the previous verse's statement, *Indeed what is with Allah is better for you*. This is explained by the fact that what you have, meaning in this worldly life which is materially based and characterized by change and transformation, is transient and depleting. In contrast, what is with God and promised to the righteous among you is enduring and will neither vanish nor perish. And what is enduring is better than what is fleeting, as is evident from rational judgement.

Understand that the saying, *That which is with you will be spent but what is with Allah shall last*, due to the generality of its phrasing, is a universal axiom, under which many particular instances of true knowledge fall.

... and We will surely pay the patient their reward for the best of what they used to do—This follows from the fact that patience is essential for fulfilling a promise, enduring the bitterness of opposing one's desire to break it when it is advantageous to do so, and indulging in one's whims. Thus, the discussion shifts from the reward of those who specifically fulfil their promises to the reward of those who are patient in the sight of God.

So, His saying, *and We will surely pay the patient their reward*, is a definite promise of reward for all forms of patience, whether it is patience in obedience, patience in refraining from sin, or patience during calamities. However, it must be patience for the sake of God, as the context does not support any other interpretation.

His saying, *for the best of what they used to do*, uses the preposition "for" (*bi*) for equivalence, as in our saying: I sold this for (*bi*) that. It does not mean the best of their deeds in contrast to their good deeds, where God distinguishes between their good deeds, categorizing them into good and best, then rewarding them for the best and disregarding the good, as some have mentioned, because the context does not support this. The verses about recompense likewise preclude such a reading, as does our knowledge of the vastness of God's Mercy. Nor does this phrase mean their obligatory and recommended deeds as opposed to their permissible deeds they performed, as these are not lacking goodness, as others have mentioned.

Therefore, the text clearly states that the focus is on rewarding deeds associated with patience, and it is evident that permissible acts done by a patient believer in God do not have a direct connection to their patience. Hence, there's no basis for considering them among the deeds to be rewarded, and then choosing the best among them.

Additionally, there is no expectation for a servant to be rewarded by God for permissible acts to the extent that the reward would be comparable with the reward of obligatory and recommended acts, which are better than permissible acts. Therefore, mentioning goodness as an afterthought seems redundant.

Therefore, it is apparent that the reference here is not to supererogatory or recommended acts, based on the assumption of their non-obligatory nature, since the obligatory acts are inherently more beneficial and commendable, a fact well established in legislative discourses to the point of utter certainty.

The intent is that God will reward the patient for the deeds they perform, choosing the best version of that type of deed. For instance, a prayer offered by a patient believer will be rewarded by God as if it were the best instance of that prayer, even if it was not the best in actuality. Patience inherently demands that the deeds are not scrutinised or judged based on their specific qualities that might otherwise render them inferior, as

suggested by the verse: *Indeed the patient will be paid in full their reward without any reckoning* (39:10).

The verse implies that patience for the sake of God leads to the perfection of one's deeds. The shift from third person to first-person narration in the phrase, *We will surely pay ...*, seems to be a return to the previous discourse, which was in the second person. This shift is common in conversations to emphasize a point or to link to a preceding passage. In this case, the previous verses were addressing the audience directly, and the shift occurs after a brief third person section beginning with: *Indeed Allah enjoins justice and kindness ,,,* The relevance of this stylistic choice is that the verse, along with the following verses, contains various divine commands and prohibitions. It is more fitting for commands and prohibitions to be attributed to the most authoritative and powerful source, thereby reinforcing them. This technique is commonly used in expressions, as in "The king orders such and such" or "Your master tells you so," rather than attributing the command to a less authoritative figure.

Therefore, it was more appropriate to attribute these ordinances to the realm of divine majesty, and to shift from addressing the audience directly to speaking in the third person: *Indeed Allah enjoins justice and kindness ...* This style continued in the subsequent duties as well, with statements like *Fulfil Allah's covenant ...*, *Allah only tests you thereby ...*, *Had Allah wished ...*, and *Do not sell Allah's covenant for a paltry gain ...*, culminating in: *That which is with you will be spent but what is with Allah shall last*.

Following this, the narrative reverts to the previous style of addressing the audience directly with *and We will surely pay the patient their reward by the best of what they used to do.* It continues in this manner until reaching *When you recite the Qur'an ...* at which point, there is a second shift to the third person with *seek the protection of Allah*. The meaning we have mentioned is best clarified by the following verse: *When We change a sign with another in its place—and Allah knows best what He sends down ...*, where both aspects are combined: the change of one verse for another is attributed to the first-person singular, and the knowledge of what is revealed is attributed to God in the third person singular.

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّن ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهُ حَيَاةً طَيِّبَةً
وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُم بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا۟ يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٧﴾

(16:97) Whoever acts righteously, male or female, should he be faithful,—We shall revive him with a good life and pay them their reward by the best of what they used to do.

This is a divine promise to the believers if they perform righteous deeds, and there is glad tidings for women that God does not differentiate between them and men in accepting their faith or the impact of their righteous deeds, which are the granting of a good life and the best reward for their deeds. This is in contrast to what most pagans, Jews, and Christians believed, depriving women of spiritual merits or diminishing their status compared to men, placing them in a position that does not accept elevation.

The phrase, *Whoever acts righteously, male or female, should he be faithful*, establishes a general rule for anyone who does good deeds, specifying that they must be believers, as the work of those who are not believers is futile and bears no consequence. This is echoed in other verses such as: *Should anyone renounce his faith, his work shall fail* (5:5) and *what they had accomplished in the world has failed, and their works have come to naught* (11:16).

The phrase, *We shall revive him with a good life*, suggests that God will grant the believer who does good deeds a unique form of life, separate from the common existence shared with others. It indicates the gift of a new life rather than merely enhancing the quality of the believer's current life. Had the intention been to simply improve their existing life, it would have been stated as, "We will surely make their life good."

The verse parallels the statement: *Is he who was lifeless, then We gave him life and provided him with a light by which he walks among the people …?* (6:122), indicating the formation of a new initial life.

This is not a metaphorical reference because the verses addressing this matter result in the real effects of life, such as the verse: *He has written faith into their hearts and strengthened them with a spirit from Him* (58:22), and the previously mentioned verse from *then We gave him life and provided him with a light by which he walks among the people* (6:122). The light here undoubtedly refers to the knowledge that guides a person to truth in belief and action.

Just as this individual possesses unique knowledge and perception, they are also endowed with a unique ability to revive truth and dispel falsehood. As God has stated: *and it was a must for Us to help the faithful* (30:47), and

those who have faith in Allah and the Last Day and act righteously—they will have no fear, nor will they grieve (5:69).

This knowledge and perception pave the way for the individual to see things as they truly are, dividing them into two categories: enduring truth and vanishing falsehood. They turn their hearts away from the fleeting and deceptive life of this world with its alluring vanities and take pride in the dignity bestowed on them by God, not humiliated by Satan's whispers, their own desires, or worldly allurements. They see the futility of worldly pleasures and the transience of its comforts.

Their hearts are attached only to their true Lord, who confirms every truth with His words. They desire only His countenance, love only His proximity, and fear only His displeasure and distance. They envisage for themselves a pure, eternal, and everlasting life, governed only by their forgiving and loving Lord. They encounter only beauty and excellence throughout their journey, for God has perfected everything He has created. There is no ugliness except what God has deemed reprehensible, which is disobedience to Him.

Such a person finds within themselves brilliance, perfection, strength, dignity, pleasure, and joy beyond measure. How could it be otherwise when they are immersed in a perpetual life, endless blessings, free of pain or disturbance, and experiencing goodness and happiness without any accompanying misery? This is corroborated by reason and numerous verses from the Qur'an, too many to mention here.

Thus, these are vital effects that can only be attributed to a real, not metaphorical, life. God has linked these to the life mentioned, specifically for those who believe and do righteous deeds. It is a new, genuine life that God bestows upon them.

The verse does not indicate a new life that is separate from the old, common life, though it is distinct. The difference is in the degree of life that they enjoy, not in its quantity, so the individual is not multiplied. Similarly, the Holy Spirit (*Rūḥ al-Quddus*) that God mentions for the prophets only elevates their status without changing their personhood.

This is what contemplation of the verse suggests, a Qur'anic truth, evident in the description of this life as "good" (*ṭayyib*) in the phrase "a good life"—a phrasing which implies a life free from internal corruption or adverse effects.

Commentators have offered a number of explanations for this verse:

(1) Some interpret the "good life" as life in Paradise, free from death, poverty, illness, or any other misery.

(2) Others suggest it refers to life in *Barzakh*, especially considering the verse's end points to the rewards of the Hereafter.

(3) Another explanation is that it refers to the life of this world coupled with contentment and satisfaction with God's provision, making it the best form of life.

(4) The lawful provision is also seen as "good life" since it incurs no punishment.

(5) Some interpret it as daily sustenance.

The issues with these explanations are already clear to the discerning reader, so further elaboration is unnecessary.

... and pay them their reward by the best of what they used to do—the meaning of this has already been discussed in the previous verse. A similar statement is found in 23:40: *but whoever acts righteously, whether male or female, should he be faithful—such shall enter paradise, provided therein without any reckoning* (40:40).

فَإِذَا قَرَأْتَ الْقُرْآنَ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ ﴿٩٨﴾

(16:98) When you recite the Qur'an, seek the protection of Allah (fa-staʿidh bi Allah) against the outcast Satan

The meaning of this verse is: "Ask God for protection from Satan's misguidance during Qur'an recitation. The command to seek refuge is for the reader's state of mind during reading." The phrase 'I seek refuge in God from Satan, the accursed' (*aʿūdhu bi-Allāh min al-Shayṭān al-rajīm*), or similar expressions are a means to evoke this sense of seeking refuge in the mind of the reader and are not effective in of themselves. God commands seeking refuge in Him, not merely uttering a formula to this effect.

This shows that the claim that the idea of "recitation" here refers metaphorically to the intention to recite, equating cause with effect, is an overly loose reading of the text.

إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ لَهُ سُلْطَانٌ عَلَى الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَلَى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ ﴿٩٩﴾

(16:99) Indeed he does not have any authority over those who

have faith and put their trust in their Lord.

This provides a rationale for the command to seek refuge in God in the previous verse. It instructs to seek refuge with God during recitation because Satan has no power over those who believe in God and rely on Him.

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From the verse, two points are evident:

First, Seeking refuge in God is a form of placing one's trust in Him, as He put placing one's trust in Him in place of seeking refuge in the explanation and denies Satan's authority over those who place their trust in Him.

Second, faith and placing one' trust in God are the essence of true divine servanthood, as exemplified in another verse addressing Iblis, *Indeed as for My servants you do not have any authority over them, except the perverse who follow you*, (15:42). Here, authority is denied over His servants, replacing "servants" in this verse with *those who have faith and put their trust in their Lord*. This reading is supported since placing one's trust in another, casting one's affairs to another and surrendering to their influence, is a specific manifestation of servitude.

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إِنَّمَا سُلْطَانُهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَتَوَلَّوْنَهُ وَالَّذِينَ هُم بِهِ مُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٠٠﴾

(16:100) His authority is only over those who befriend him and those who make him a partner

This clarifies that Satan's dominion is confined to those who take him as their guardian, managing their affairs as he wishes, and obeying him; and those who associate him with God. This is because obedience is akin to worship, as indicated in the verse: *Did I not exhort you, O children of Adam, saying, "Do not worship Satan. He is indeed your manifest enemy. Worship Me. That is a straight path"?*

This leads us to draw two conclusions:

First, the latter part of the verse explains its beginning, indicating that taking as an ally someone whom God has not authorised to be taken as such is equivalent to associating partners with God and worshiping someone other than Him.

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Second, there is no middle ground between relying on God and allying with Satan and worshiping him. Anyone not relying on God is among Satan's allies.

It has been suggested that the singular pronoun in *and those who make him a partner* refers to God, indicating that Satan's dominion is over two groups: the polytheists and those monotheists who take him as an ally. However, this reading, necessitating a change in pronouns, is not compelling.

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وَإِذَا بَدَّلْنَا آيَةً مَّكَانَ آيَةٍ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يُنَزِّلُ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا أَنتَ مُفْتَرٍ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٠١﴾

(16:101) When We change (baddalnā) a sign with another in its place—and Allah knows best what He sends down—they say, 'You are just a fabricator.' Rather most of them do not know.

This invokes to the concept of abrogation (*naskh*) and defends against accusations of fabrication against the Prophet Muḥammad. The context of the verses suggests that the accusers were the polytheists, though it was the Jews who were particularly adamant in denying abrogation. It is possible that the polytheists picked up this claim from the Jews, as they often consulted them regarding the Prophet.

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According to al-Rāghib: "The verbs *ibdāl*, *tabdīl*, *tabaddul*, and *istibdāl* means to place one thing in a place of another. This is more general than compensation (*'iwaḍ*), which implies receiving something in return for giving something else. Substitution can refer to change in general, even without a replacement being provided, as the Almighty says, *But the wrongdoers changed* (baddala) *the saying with other than what they were told* (2:59), and so on, until He says, *And should anyone alter it* (baddala-hu) *after hearing it* (2:181) and *When We change a sign with another in its place* and *We substituted for them* (baddalnā-hum) *two gardens with two gardens* (34:16), and *Then We substituted* (baddalnā) *good in place of the evil* (7:95)."

Thus, substitution in the sense of change differs from its known meaning in that its first object is what is taken and sought, as opposed to its well-known meaning where the focus is on what is replaced. So, the meaning of *When We change a sign with another in its place* is that we put the second verse in place of the first through change, making the second, substituted verse the one that remains and is sought.

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... and Allah knows best what He sends down—implies that the truth remains within its rightful place, and that God, who sent down the

revelation, is most qualified to know its nature. This is a parenthetical statement, highlighting God's knowledge.

... they say, 'You are just a fabricator'—This shows the polytheists accusing the Prophet of fabrication, finding the idea of substituting one statement for another, then changing opinions, as incompatible with divine dignity.

Their accusation is exaggerated; they don't just accuse him of fabricating in this instance of abrogation but declare him an outright fabricator, using a nominal sentence to emphasize the claim. They base this on the unity of the Prophet's message, attributing all to God and presenting himself merely as a warner. If he is deemed a fabricator in one aspect, they argue, he must be seen as such in all, reducing him to nothing but a fabricator.

Rather most of them do not know—This implies that the majority of these polytheists, who accuse the Prophet of being a fabricator, are ignorant of the true nature and wisdom behind such substitution and abrogation. These divine decrees are based on the welfare of people, which may vary with changing circumstances and times. Therefore, it is necessary for the ruling to change as its utility evolves, leading to abrogation of a prior ruling by a new one more suited to the present context. Most of these accusers are unaware of this concept, while a minority, despite their awareness, are arrogant and contentious towards the truth, carelessly dismissing it without due consideration.

قُلْ نَزَّلَهُ رُوحُ الْقُدُسِ مِن رَّبِّكَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيُثَبِّتَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ وَهُدًى وَبُشْرَى لِلْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴿١٠٢﴾

(16:102) Say, the Holy Spirit (Rūḥ al-Quddus) has brought it down duly from your Lord to fortify those who have faith and as a guidance and good news for those who submit.

An earlier part of the chapter already alluded to the meaning of "Spirit", while "Holy" signifies purity and sanctity. It appears that the possessive construct signifies a spirit that is pure from the impurities of matter and free from errors, faults, and misguidance. In another part of His speech, it is referred to as "the Trustworthy Spirit" (*al-Rūḥ al-Amīn*), and elsewhere as "Gabriel" among the angels. The Almighty says, *The Trustworthy Spirit has brought it down upon your heart* (26:194), and *Whoever is an*

enemy to Gabriel—it is he who has brought it down upon your heart (2:97). This indicates that the Qur'an was revealed gradually by the Holy Spirit, identified in other passages as the angel Gabriel. The phrase "from your Lord" underscores the special care and mercy that God holds towards the Prophet Muḥammad. The revelation aims to solidify the faith of believers, offering them steadfastness and renewal of guidance, adapting to changing necessities.

When God says, *Say, the Holy Spirit has brought it down* (nazzala-hu) *duly from your Lord*, this is a command to respond. What first comes to mind is that the pronoun refers to the Qur'an insofar as it is the abrogator, meaning the abrogating verse. It could also refer to the Qur'an in general. The use of the verb *tanzīl* instead of *inzāl* (that is, *anzala-hu*) suggests a gradual process.

Note that the verse could have said, "from my Lord," but it was changed to, "from your Lord," to indicate complete care and mercy God has for the Prophet, as if God did not wish to interrupt his speech, as if He wished to seize the opportunity to speak to him whenever possible. It also indicates that the utterance God is commanding the Prophet to pronounce is to inform his audience of this fact, not just to utter these words. Reflect on this.

The phrase, *to fortify* (li-yuthabbit) *those who have faith*—the verb *tathbīt* means to reinforce and affirm their steadfastness by bestowing stability upon them, as if by their initial belief in Allah, His messenger, and the last day, they were established in truth. With the renewal of rulings according to the changing benefits, they are given additional stability without weakening their initial steadfastness, as deeds that do not match what is currently beneficial might. It is clear that one who is commanded to follow a path for a certain benefit, who then proceeds on it out of his faith in the original guiding command, and covers a distance as ordered, in quick or slow pace, day or night, and then the direction of the benefit changes—if a new guiding command does not change his direction of travel and he continues in accordance with the previous order, the believer's faith weakens and its foundations erode. However, if a new direction of proceeding is issued that aligns with the intended benefit and ensures the believer's happiness, their faith becomes even more steadfast.

Thus, in the revelation of the Qur'an with its abrogation and renewal

of rulings according to changing benefits, there is a strengthening for those who believe, giving them stability upon stability.

... as a guidance and good news for those who submit—this refers to those who submit their judgement to God without objection. For them, the abrogating verse represents a new path and a promise of happiness and paradise.

The distinction between affirming the believers and guiding and giving good news to the Muslims is due to the difference between faith (*imān*) and submission (*islām*). Faith resides in the heart and ensures stability in knowledge and consent. Submission, manifesting in outward actions and physical compliance, involves being guided to the obligation of deeds and receiving glad tidings that the ultimate goal is paradise and happiness.

We have already discussed the topic of abrogation (*naskh*) in our commentary on the verse, *For any verse that We abrogate or remove from memories, We bring another which is better than it, or similar to it* (2:106).

وَلَقَدْ نَعْلَمُ أَنَّهُمْ يَقُولُونَ إِنَّمَا يُعَلِّمُهُ بَشَرٌ لِّسَانُ الَّذِى يُلْحِدُونَ إِلَيْهِ
أَعْجَمِىٌّ وَهَذَا لِسَانٌ عَرَبِىٌّ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٠٣﴾

(16:103) We certainly know that they say, 'It is only a human that teaches him.' The language of him to whom they refer is non-Arabic, while this is a clear Arabic language.

This is another false accusation they make against the Prophet Muḥammad. The context suggests that by *It is only a human that teaches him*, they were referring to a non-Arab man, not fluent in his speech, who had some knowledge of religions and prophethood. They accused the Prophet of learning from this man and falsely attributing it to divine revelation. The phrase, *It is only a human that teaches him*, is a concise statement implying that the Prophet was receiving the content of his message from a human being and falsely claiming it as a revelation from God.

The response, focusing on the non-Arabic language of the man contrasted with the Arabic of the Qur'an, does not fully address the suspicion. It is conceivable that the man could have conveyed concepts in his non-Arabic language, which the Prophet could have then eloquently articulated in Arabic. This seems the more likely reading given their use of the word "taught" rather than "dictated" or "instructed," as teaching is more

associated with concepts than exact wording.

Thus, it becomes clear that the phrase *The language of him to whom they refer is non-Arabic, while this is a clear Arabic language* is not the sole answer to their doubt, but the subsequent passages up to the end of the next two verses complete the divine response to them.

The summary of the response, derived from all three verses, addresses the accusation that the Prophet was taught by a man, and then falsely attributed it to God. If the accusation meant he was taught the exact words of the Qur'an, the response is that the man's tongue was non-Arabic, while the Qur'an is in clear Arabic.

If the accusation implied the man taught the meanings of the Qur'an, with the Prophet himself articulating them in Arabic and falsely claiming them as divine, the response is that the Qur'an contains true knowledge that rational minds accept. God guided the Prophet to this knowledge and, as a believer in God's signs, he would not falsely attribute it to God. Only those who do not believe in God's signs would fabricate lies against Him. Thus, this Qur'an is not a fabrication, nor taken from a human and falsely attributed to God.

The language of him to whom they refer is non-Arabic, while this is a clear Arabic language—addresses the first aspect of the doubt: whether the Qur'an's words were taught to the Prophet by a man in a foreign language. It emphasizes that the Qur'an, as recited to them, is in clear Arabic, distinct from the non-fluent Arabic of the foreign man.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ لاَ يَهْدِيهِمُ اللَّهُ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١٠٤﴾
إِنَّمَا يَفْتَرِى الْكَذِبَ الَّذِينَ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ
الْكَاذِبُونَ﴿١٠٥﴾

(16:104-105) Indeed those who do not believe in the signs of Allah—Allah shall not guide them and there is a painful punishment for them. Only those fabricate lies who do not believe in the signs of Allah, and it is they who are the liars.

These verses address the second aspect of the objection, namely that someone else taught the Prophet the ideas of the Qur'an, which he then falsely attributed to God.

The meaning is: Indeed, those who do not believe in the signs of God and deny them, God does not guide them to those signs and to its manifest and true knowledge, and they will suffer a painful punishment. The Prophet is a believer in the signs of God because he is guided by God's guidance. Only those who do not believe in the signs of God fabricate lies and attribute them to God, and they are the liars who persist in lying. But someone like the Prophet, who believes in the signs of God, does not fabricate lies or lie. Thus, the two verses imply that the Prophet is guided by God's guidance, believes in His signs, and such a person does not fabricate or lie.

Some commentators have read these verses as detached from the first one and interpreted the previous verse as a complete answer to the doubt, focusing on the Qur'an's linguistic miracle. However, there is no indication in the verse itself about the Qur'an being a linguistic miracle. It simply states that the Qur'an is in clear Arabic, which a non-Arabic speaker could not produce.

They have read the two subsequent verses as a threat of painful punishment to the disbelievers in God's signs who accuse the Prophet of falsehood, turning the accusation of fabrication back on them, as they do not believe in God's signs and hence are not guided by Him. They have further commented on the verses' individual words, moving further away from their core meanings.

As you can see, this approach fails to fully address the problem at its root.

Examining Narrations

(1) In "*al-Durr al-Manthūr*," Aḥmad narrates from ʿUthmān b. Abī al-ʿĀs, who said: "I was sitting with the Messenger of God when he looked upwards and said, "Gabriel came to me and instructed me to place this verse in this position in the chapter: *Indeed Allah enjoins justice and kindness and generosity towards relatives, and He forbids indecency, wrong, and aggression. He advises you, so that you may take admonition* (16:90).

Author's comment: This was also narrated by Ibn ʿAbbās from ʿUthmān b. Maẓʿūn, may God be pleased with him.

(2) In *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, al-Ṭabrisī narrates that ʿUthmān b. Maẓʿūn

said, "I embraced Islam out of modesty towards the Messenger of God due to his frequent preaching of Islam to me, though Islam had not yet settled in my heart. One day, I was with him during his contemplation, he gazed towards the sky as if he was contemplating something—and when his contemplation ended, I asked him about his condition. He replied, 'Indeed, while I was talking to you, I saw Gabriel in the air, and he came to me with this verse: *Indeed Allah enjoins justice and kindness and generosity towards relatives …*—he recited it to me until the end', and it was then that Islam settled in my heart.'

I went to his uncle Abū Ṭālib and informed him, and he said, 'O people of Quraysh, follow Muḥammad, and you will be rightly guided, for he orders you nothing but noble morals.' I then went to Walīd b. al-Mughīra and recited this verse to him, and he said, 'If Muḥammad said it, then it is excellent, and if his Lord said it, then it is excellent.' God then revealed: *Did you see him who turned away, gave a little and held off?* (53:33)."

'Ikrama also said, "The Prophet recited this verse to Walīd b. al-Mughīra—who said, "O nephew, repeat it." After it was repeated, he remarked, "It indeed has sweetness, and it is eloquent. Its top is fruitful, and its bottom is lush. It is not the word of a human.'"

(3) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, with his chain from Ismā'īl b. Muslim to Imām al-Ṣādiq regarding the verse, it is stated: "God has no command for His servants except for justice and kindness."

(4) In *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, it is narrated from Ibn Babawayh with his chain from 'Amr b. 'Uthmān, who said: "'Alī approached his companions as they were discussing chivalry (*muruwwa*) and said: "Where are you in relation to the Book of God?" They asked, "O Commander of the Faithful, in what context?" He replied: "In the verse where He, the Almighty, says: *Indeed Allah enjoins justice and kindness*. So, justice is fairness, and kindness is graciousness."

Author's comment: This was also narrated by al-'Ayyāshī from 'Amr b. 'Uthmān al-'Āsi about him, peace be upon him.

(5) It is also narrated in *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, from Ibn al-Najjar in his history through the chain of Al-Akli from his father about him,

peace be upon him, with the wording: "'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib passed by a group discussing nobility and said: "Hasn't God the Almighty sufficed you with this in His Book, where He says: (Indeed, God commands justice and good conduct)?" Justice here means fairness, and good conduct means graciousness."

Author's comment: Several narrations interpret justice as monotheism or the two testimonies of faith, and kindness as the allegiance to the Prophet's Household (*wilāya*). In another narration, the prohibition of breaking one's covenant is linked to the obligation of maintaining this *wilāya*.

(6) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, regarding the verse: *Whoever acts righteously, male or female, should he be faithful,—We shall revive him with a good life*, Imām ʿAlī said: "This means contentment (*al-qunūʿ*)."

(7) In *Maʿānī al-Akhbār*, al-Ṣadūq narrates via his chain from Ibn Abī ʿUmayr from one of his companions that Abū ʿAbd Allāh was asked about Abū al-Khaṭṭāb claiming that he had said: "When you recognize the truth, act as you wish," to which he replied: "May God curse Abū al-Khattab; by God, I never said that. But I told him: "When you recognize the truth, any good deed you do will be accepted." Indeed, God Almighty says: *but whoever acts righteously, whether male or female, should he be faithful—such shall enter paradise, provided therein without any reckoning* (40:40), and He says: *Whoever acts righteously, male or female, should he be faithful,—We shall revive him with a good life* ...

Author's comment: This is in line with what we have previously explained about the meaning of the verse.

(8) In al-Kāfī, al-Kulaynī narrates via his chain from Abū Baṣīr, about Abū ʿAbd Allāh: "I said to him: *When you recite the Qur'an, seek the protection of Allah ... and put their trust in their Lord* (16:98-99)" He replied: "O Muḥammad, by God, Satan is given power over the bodies of the believers, but not over their faith. He was given power over Job, disfiguring his body, but not over his faith. Satan may be given power over the bodies of some believers, but not over their faith."

I said to him: "What about the verse *His authority is only over those who befriend him and those who make him a partner*?" he said:

"Those who associate others with God, he has power over their bodies and their faith."

Author's comment: This was also narrated by al-ʿAyyāshī from Abū Baṣīr, from the Imām. Reading the pronoun of *make him a partner* as referring to God is one of the two possible readings of the verse.

(9) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is narrated by al-Ḥākim—and authenticated by him—and al-Bayhaqī in *Shuʿub al-Imān* from Ibn ʿAbbās: Regarding the verse: *They say, It is only a human that teaches him*, he said: "They claimed that Muḥammad was taught by ʿAbda b. al-Haḍramī, a man of the scriptures. Therefore, God responded: *The language of him to whom they refer is non-Arabic, while this is a clear Arabic language.*"

(10) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is narrated from Muḥammad b. ʿAzāma al-Ṣayrafī, who reported from someone, who reported from Abū ʿAbd Allāh: "God, the Almighty, created the Holy Spirit, and He has not created any being closer to Him than it, yet it is not the most honored of His creation. When He wills something, He conveys it to the Holy Spirit, who then conveys it to the stars." He continues, quoting the verse *We certainly know that they say, 'It is only a human that instructs him.' The language of him to whom they refer*—He refers to Abū Fakīha, a servant of the Banū Haḍramī—*is non-Arabic*—and he had converted to the Prophet's faith, being of the People of the Book. The Quraysh said, "By God, he teaches Muḥammad his knowledge in his language." God responded, *while this is a clear Arabic language*.

Author's comment: Narrations about this man differ. In this narration, he is Abū Fakīha, a servant of the Banū Haḍramī, and in another, he is Abda b. al-Haḍramī. According to Qatāda, he was called Muqīṣ, and according to al-Sudayy, he was a Christian servant of the Banū Haḍramī, known as Abū Bashīr. Mujāhid states that he was known as Ibn al-Haḍramī, that he spoke Roman, and another narration from Ibn ʿAbbās mentions him as a Roman man named Balaʿām who dwelt in Mecca. What is certain from these narrations is that he was a Roman, a servant of the Banū Haḍramī, living in Mecca, a Christian knowledgeable in the scriptures, who was accused of teaching the Prophet the content of his message.

(11) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, and Ibn Abī

Ḥātim narrated from al-Ḍaḥḥāk about the verse, saying: "They claimed Salmān the Persian was teaching him, so God revealed: *The language of him to whom they refer is non-Arabic*."

Author's comment: This is inconsistent with the Meccan provenance of the verse.

(12) Also in *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, Ibn al-Kharā'iṭī in *Musāwī al-Akhlāq* and Ibn ʿAsākir in his *Ta'rīkh* both narrate from ʿAbd Allāh b. Jarrād: He asked the Prophet whether a believer can commit adultery or theft. The Prophet affirmed it could happen, but denied that a believer could lie. He then recited the verse: *Only those fabricate lies who do not believe in the signs of Allah* (16:105).

(13) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, Al-ʿAbbās b. al-Hilāl reported that Abū al-Ḥasan al-Riḍā mentioned a person known to be a liar and said: "God said, *Only those fabricate lies who do not believe in the signs of Allah*."

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Verses 106-111

The verses contain a warning against disbelief after having faith, which refers to apostasy (*irtidād*). There is also a beautiful promise for those who migrate after being persecuted, as well as for those who are steadfast in striving in the way of God. Additionally, the verses address the ruling on *taqiyya* (the practice of concealing one's belief in times of persecution).

مَن كَفَرَ بِاللَّهِ مِن بَعْدِ إِيمَانِهِ إِلاَّ مَنْ أُكْرِهَ وَقَلْبُهُ مُطْمَئِنٌّ بِالإِيمَانِ
وَلَـٰكِن مَّن شَرَحَ بِالْكُفْرِ صَدْرًا فَعَلَيْهِمْ غَضَبٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ
عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٠٦﴾

(16:106) Whoever renounces faith in Allah after affirming his faith—barring someone who is compelled while his heart is at rest (muṭma'inn) in faith—but those who open up their breasts to unfaith (sharahā bi al-kufr ṣadran), upon such shall be Allah's wrath, and there is a great punishment for them.

Muṭma'inn is the active participle of the verb *itmi'nān*, which conveys tranquillity, calmness, and stability. *Sharḥ* signifies expansion. In his *Mufradāt*, al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī explains that the original meaning of *sharḥ* is to spread out meat or something similar. It is said: "I spread out the meat" (*sharaḥtu al-laḥm*). This is related to the phrase *sharḥ al-ṣadr* ("the expansion of the chest"), which means to expand a person's chest with divine light, tranquillity from God, and a spirit from Him. He says: *My Lord! Open my breast for me* (20:25); *Did We not open your breast for you* (94:1); *Is someone whose breast Allah has opened to Islam ...* (39:22). "To expand difficult speech" means to explain it and reveal its hidden meanings.

Regarding the verse: *Whoever renounces faith in Allah after affirming his faith ...*, it is a conditional statement whose response is in the verse: *upon such shall be Allah's wrath*, and it is further elaborated with *and there is a great punishment for them*. The plural pronoun "them" in the consequent refers back to the conditional subject ("whoever"), as it is generically inclusive of multiple individuals.

... *barring someone who is compelled while his heart is at rest in faith* is an exception to the general condition. It refers to being compelled to utter a statement of disbelief or to demonstrate it outwardly, as a person's heart cannot be forced to accept something. The meaning is except those who, after having faith, are coerced into disbelief outwardly, while their heart remains content with faith.

And regarding His statement: *but those who open up their breasts to unfaith*, this refers to those who have willingly accepted disbelief, embracing it willingly and fully. This sentence is a correction to the exception, returning to the meaning of what is being excepted. The intended meaning of His statement: *Whoever renounces faith in Allah after affirming his faith* ... refers to someone who is coerced while his heart is at peace with faith. However, what is actually meant here is those who willingly accept disbelief in their hearts. The combination of the exception and this correction provides a complete explanation of the condition, which is why the exception is interjected between the condition and its consequence, rather than being postponed until after the condition is complete.

Some have said that His statement: *Whoever renounces faith in Allah* ... is a permutation (*badal*) of *who do not believe in the signs of Allah* in the preceding verse, and His statement: *and it is they who are the liars*, is an intervening sentence. His statement: *barring someone who is compelled* is an exception from that, and His statement: *but those who open up their breasts to unfaith* begins a new thought, the implied consequence of which is His statement: *upon such shall be Allah's wrath*.

The meaning, according to this reading, is that only those who fabricate lies are those who disbelieve after their belief, except for those who are forced while their hearts are content with faith. At this point, the statement is complete, then it begins anew with: However, those who open their hearts to disbelief, upon them is the wrath of God.

However, common sense renders this explanation unnecessary, given its obvious absurdity.

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمُ اسْتَحَبُّواْ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا عَلَى الآخِرَةِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لاَ يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٠٧﴾

(16:107) That, because they preferred the life of the world to the

Hereafter and that Allah does not guide the faithless lot.

This explains why God's wrath befalls them and why they face a great punishment. It is because they have chosen the material life of this world, which is aimed solely at animalistic pleasure and indulgence in personal desires, over the life of the Hereafter, which is an eternal life in the proximity of the Lord of the Worlds, and the ultimate goal of human life.

In other words, these people desired only the worldly life, disconnected from the Hereafter, disbelieving in it. God does not guide such disbelieving people. Since God did not guide them, they strayed from the path of happiness, paradise, and divine pleasure, falling into the wrath of God and a great punishment.

أُوْلَٰٓئِكَ الَّذِينَ طَبَعَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَسَمْعِهِمْ وَأَبْصَارِهِمْ وَأُولَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْغَافِلُونَ ﴿١٠٨﴾

(16:108) They are the ones on whose hearts Allah has set a seal, and on their hearing and their sight, and it is they who are the heedless.

This indicates that choosing the worldly life over the Hereafter and being deprived of God's guidance characterizes those whose hearts, hearing, and vision God has sealed, and who are considered heedless.

By choosing the worldly life as their ultimate goal and depriving themselves of guidance to the Hereafter, they have severed their connection to the Afterlife, attaching themselves to the material world and making it their sole pursuit. Consequently, their senses and intellect are confined within the bounds of this world, unable to transcend to considerations of the Afterlife. They are thus unable to see what should be learned, hear advice that should be heeded, or comprehend arguments that would guide them to the Afterlife.

They are marked by a divine seal upon their hearts, hearing, and vision. Thus, their hearts, ears, and eyes are impervious to anything that could lead them to the Afterlife, remaining oblivious to it, without any awareness of its significance.

The previous verse's description thus serves as an identification of the divine sealing (of the heart) and obliviousness mentioned in this verse.

Their lack of divine guidance following their attachment to the worldly life is the essence of this divine sealing and ignorance. The sealing is a divine act attributed to God as a form of retribution, while ignorance is a trait attributed to themselves.

لاَ جَرَمَ أَنَّهُمْ فِي الآخِرَةِ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ ﴿١٠٩﴾

(16:109) Undoubtedly, they are the ones who will be the losers in the Hereafter.

They are losers because they squandered their capital in the worldly life, they remain without any provision to sustain them in their Hereafter. A similar context is found in Surah Hud: *Undoubtedly, they are the ones who will be the biggest losers in the Hereafter* (11:22). The emphasis there might be due to the additional trait of obstructing the path of God, which He ascribes to them.

ثُمَّ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لِلَّذِينَ هَاجَرُواْ مِن بَعْدِ مَا فُتِنُواْ ثُمَّ جَاهَدُواْ وَصَبَرُواْ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ مِن بَعْدِهَا لَغَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١١٠﴾

(16:110) Then indeed your Lord, to those who migrated, after they were persecuted (min baʿd mā futinū), and strived and were patient—indeed, after that, your Lord will surely be all-forgiving, all-merciful.

Fitna (from whence *futinū* is derived) originally refers to the act of testing gold by fire to reveal its quality, and later came to be used to denote any form of trial or torture. The Quraysh and the polytheists of Mecca persecuted the believers to force them to renounce their religion, subjecting them to various forms of cruelty. Some believers even died under torture, like the case of ʿAmmār and his parents. ʿAmmār outwardly renounced his faith under duress, thus justifying dissimulation (*taqiyya*), about which the preceding verses were revealed, as will be discussed later in the narrational analysis.

Hence, this verse is connected to the context of the preceding verses, especially to the part: *barring someone who is compelled while his heart is at rest in faith*. The verse implies: After all this, God is indeed Forgiving, Merciful to those who emigrated after being persecuted, then strived and

were patient.

Therefore, his statement: *Then indeed your Lord, to those who migrated, after they were persecuted*, is a beautiful promise of forgiveness and mercy on the Day of Judgement for the emigrants who were persecuted. This is in contrast to the complete loss threatened to others on that day. The condition of striving and patience after migration is emphasized for this promise.

His statement: ... *indeed, after that, your Lord will surely be all-forgiving, all-merciful*, is like a summary of the earlier lengthy statement and also serves as its conclusion. It suggests a meaning of confirmation, similar to saying, "Zayd is in the house, Zayd is in the house ..." It also indicates that the conditions mentioned in the statement are integral to the meaning here, as God is not pleased with them unless they migrate, nor with their migration unless they subsequently strive in His path and show patience.

يَوْمَ تَأْتِي كُلُّ نَفْسٍ تُجَادِلُ عَن نَّفْسِهَا وَتُوَفَّىٰ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿١١١﴾

(16:111) The day when every soul (nafs) will come pleading for itself (ʿan nafsi-hā) and every soul will be recompensed fully for what it has done, and they will not be wronged.

The soul "coming" on the Day of Judgement signifies its presence before the Divine Judge, as stated: *So they will indeed be arraigned* (37:127). The pronoun in "for itself" (*nafsi-hā*) refers to the soul itself. It is common to add the soul to its own pronoun, as the term "soul" (*nafs*) can mean the human person, like in the verse: *that whoever kills a soul not in retaliation for another* (5:32), or it can be used for emphasis, equivalent to the preceding term, whether it refers to a person or not, as in "the person himself" (*al-insān nafsu-hu*), "the horse itself", "the stone itself", and "the darkness itself." One can also phrase this as "the same person" (*nafs al-insān*), "the same horse", "the same stone", "the same darkness." When God says, *for itself* (ʿan nafsi-hā), the *nafs* in this phrase is used in this second sense, while the pronoun *-hā* refers back to *soul*, which is used in the sense of a person. The expression with the pronoun avoids the awkwardness of repeating the word through addition. We will omit the lengthy discussions of the commentators here for the sake of brevity.

His statement: *The day when every soul will come pleading for itself*

relates to the previous verse, *all-forgiving, all-merciful.* The soul's defence on its own behalf is its attempt to justify itself, having forgotten everything else in contrast to its worldly life, where it was concerned with everything but itself. This is due to the realization of the truth that one has no real business beyond oneself and should primarily be concerned with oneself. Thus, on that day, the soul arrives and is present for accountability, defending itself with all the excuses it can muster.

... and every soul will be recompensed fully (tuwaffā) *for what it has done, and they will not be wronged—tawfiya* ("Recompense in full") means giving the full due without any reduction. The compensation is directly linked to the act itself, as it is stated: *what it has done*, indicating that what is given is the exact deed without any alteration or substitution, embodying perfect justice. Hence, there is neither addition nor subtraction from what they deserve, followed by the reassurance that, *they will not be wronged*.

This verse indicates the following:

Firstly, that on the Day of Judgement, no soul will defend or argue on behalf of another, but will be solely preoccupied with itself, having no concern for others. This is as stated: *the day when a friend will not avail a friend in any way, nor will they be helped* (44:41), and also: *the day when neither wealth nor children will avail* (26:88), and: *a day on which there will be no bargaining, neither friendship, nor intercession* (2:254).

Secondly, that arguing will not benefit the soul in averting the recompense it has earned. What it is recompensed is precisely what it has acted upon, and there is no way to alter this correlation, and it does not constitute any form of injustice.

Examining Narrations

(1) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, and Ibn Mardawayh reported from Ibn ʿAbbās, who said: When the Messenger of God intended to migrate to Medina, he told his companions: "Disperse from me; those who are strong should delay until the end of the night, and those who are not should go at the beginning of the night. When you hear that I have settled on the land, then join me."

Bilāl the *muezzin*, Khabbāb, ʿAmmār, and a Qurayshī woman who

had converted to Islam were left in Mecca. The polytheists and Abū Jahl captured them. They offered Bilāl to renounce his faith, but he refused. They then put an iron armor in the sun and made him wear it. When they did, he said, "*Aḥad*, *Aḥad* (One, One)." As for Khabbāb, they dragged him through thorns.

ʿAmmār said some words to them under duress to save himself (*taqiyya*) that pleased them, and the woman was tortured by Abū Jahl who stretched her with four stakes and then killed her with a spear. They then released Bilāl, Khabbāb, and ʿAmmār, who joined the Messenger of God and informed him of what had happened. The Prophet, peace be upon him, asked ʿAmmār, "How was your heart when you said what you said? Was it at ease with what you said or not?" ʿAmmār replied, "No." The verse was then revealed: *barring someone who is compelled while his heart is at rest in faith*.

Author's comment: The woman mentioned in the narrative is Sumayya, ʿAmmār's mother. It is also said that ʿAmmār's father, Yāsir, was the first martyr in Islam. The narratives about their deaths following torture are numerous, ʿAmmār's renunciation of faith in *taqiyya*, and the revelation of the verse about him.

(2) In the same source, ʿAbd al-Razzāq, Ibn Saʿd, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ibn Mardawayh, al-Ḥākim—who declared it authentic—and al-Bayhaqī in *Dalā'il al-Nubuwwa* reported from Abū ʿUbayda b. Muḥammad b. ʿAmmār, who said: The polytheists captured ʿAmmār b. Yāsir and did not release him until he insulted the Prophet and praised their gods. When ʿAmmār came to the Prophet he asked, "What happened?" ʿAmmār replied, "Bad. I did not stop until I insulted you and praised their gods." The Prophet asked, "How do you find your heart?" ʿAmmār said, "At peace with faith." The Prophet said, "If they return to you, do the same," and the verse was revealed: *barring someone who is compelled while his heart is at rest in faith* (16:106).

(3) In *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, al-Ṭabrisī narrates that Ibn ʿAbbās and Qatāda said that the verse was revealed about a group who were subject to persecution, including ʿAmmār, Yāsir his father, his mother Sumayya, Ṣuhayb, Bilāl, and Khabbāb. They were tortured; Yāsir and his wife were killed, and ʿAmmār told their

torturers what they wanted to hear from him. Then God informed His Messenger of this. Some people said ʿAmmār had disbelieved, but the Prophet said, "No, ʿAmmār is filled with faith from his head to his feet, and faith is mixed with his flesh and blood."

ʿAmmār came to the Prophet crying. The Prophet asked, "What's wrong?" ʿAmmār replied, "I spoke blasphemously to save myself. I disavowed you and praised their deities." The Prophet comforted him and said, "If they return to you, do the same," and the verse was revealed.

In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, Ibn Saʿd reports from ʿUmar b. al-Ḥakam who said: ʿAmmār b. Yāsir was tortured until he did not know what he was saying, and so was Ṣuhayb, and so was Abū Fukayha, and Bilāl, and ʿAmmār, and Ibn Fuhayra, and a group of Muslims—and in their case, this verse was revealed: *Then indeed your Lord, to those who migrated, after they were persecuted* ...

Author's comment: Among them, in some narrations, ʿAbbās b. Abī Rabīʿa is named, and in others, both he and Walīd b. Abī Rabīʿa, and Walīd b. Walīd b. Mughīra, and Abū Jandal b. Suhayl b. ʿAmr are mentioned. The most comprehensive narration on this matter is from Ibn Abbas, namely, that this verse was revealed concerning those companions of the Prophet who were persecuted: *Then indeed your Lord, to those who migrated, after they were persecuted* ...

(4) In *al-Kāfī*, al-Kulaynī transmits via his chain of narrators, from Abū ʿAmr al-Zubayrī, from Abū ʿAbd Allāh: "As for what is incumbent upon the heart from faith—acknowledgement, recognition, commitment, satisfaction, and submission—that there is no deity except God alone, without a partner, a single God, that He has not taken a spouse nor a child, and that Muhammad is His servant and messenger, and the acknowledgement of what he brought from God, whether a prophecy or a scripture: that is what God has made incumbent upon the heart in terms of acknowledgement and recognition—and that is its action and it is the saying of God, the Almighty and Glorious: *barring someone who is compelled while his heart is at rest in faith—but those who open up their breasts to unfaith, upon such shall be Allah's wrath, and there is a great punishment for them*."

(5) In the same source, al-Kulaynī narrates via his chain of narrators from Masʿada b. Ṣadaqa: "It was said to Abū ʿAbd Allāh: 'People narrate—that ʿAlī said on the pulpit of Kūfa: "O people, you will be called to insult me, so insult me—then you will be called to disavow me, but do not disavow me."' Imām al-Ṣādiq said: 'How much do people lie about Ali, peace be upon him!' Then he said: 'He only said: "You will be called to insult me, so insult me, then you will be called to disavow, and I am upon the religion of Muhammad and he did not say: and do not disavow me."'
The questioner then asked: 'What do you think if one chooses death over disavowal?' He said: 'By God, that is not upon him, and he has no duty besides what happened with ʿAmmar b. Yāsir when the people of Mecca forced him to renounce his beliefs while his heart was at peace with faith. The Prophet then said to him: "O ʿAmmār, if they return to you, do the same, for God has revealed your excuse: *barring someone who is compelled while his heart is at rest in faith*, I command you to do this."

Author's comment: A narration to this effect is narrated by al-ʿAyyāshī in his *Tafsīr*, from Muʿammar b. Yaḥyā b. Sālim from Abū Jaʿfar and his saying: "if they return to you, do the same" is derived from the verse since the exception in it is not from the person but is stated as a general rule, which is an attempt to coerce someone whose heart is secure in faith. As for it being a command from Him, the Almighty, as the Prophet commanded, perhaps the reason is that the explicit exception is a permission, and with the permissibility of that, there is no room for refusal, which is exposing oneself to death and throwing oneself into destruction, so this permission encompasses obligation rather than just permissibility.

(6) In the *Tafsīr* of al-ʿAyyāshī, it is narrated from ʿAmr b. Marwān, who said: "I heard Abū ʿAbd Allāh say: "The Messenger of God said: 'Four things are lifted from my community: what they commit in error, what they forget, what they are coerced into, and what they cannot endure, and that is in the book of God: ... *while his heart is at rest in faith*.'"

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Verses 112-128

These verses continue from the previous section dealing with legal rulings. They mention the prohibitions and permissions regarding food, and it warns against arbitrarily declaring things lawful or unlawful without God's permission. It also mentions some laws that were instituted for the Israelites but later abrogated. This connects to the earlier discussion on abrogation in the verse: *When We change a sign with another in its place* (16:101). It highlights that what was revealed to the Prophet was indeed the religion of Abraham, which was founded on balance and monotheism, and devoid of the hardships God imposed on the Israelites due to their transgressions.

The final part of these verses enjoins justice in meting out punishment, encourages patience and seeking reward through enduring trials, and delivers a beautiful promise of help and sufficiency if they fear God and do good deeds.

وَضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلاً قَرْيَةً كَانَتْ آمِنَةً مُّطْمَئِنَّةً يَأْتِيهَا رِزْقُهَا رَغَدًا مِّن كُلِّ مَكَانٍ فَكَفَرَتْ بِأَنْعُمِ اللَّهِ فَأَذَاقَهَا اللَّهُ لِبَاسَ الْجُوعِ وَالْخَوْفِ بِمَا كَانُواْ يَصْنَعُونَ ﴿١١٢﴾

(16:112) Allah draws a parable: A town secure and peaceful. Its provision came abundantly from every place (raghadan). But it was ungrateful toward Allah's blessings. So Allah made it taste hunger and fear because of what they used to do.

The term *raghad* in living refers to a comfortable, plentiful life.

This is a parable set forth by God, describing a city that received all it needed for a comfortable life. God completed these blessings by sending them a prophet who called them to what was beneficial for them in both their worldly and next-worldly affairs. However, they were ungrateful for His blessings and denied His messenger. Consequently, God replaced His blessings with punishment and afflicted them for their wrongdoing in denying His messenger. This example serves as a warning against ingratitude for God's blessings and disbelief in His signs after they have

been revealed.

This parable also sets the stage for the subsequent discussion on what is permissible and impermissible to eat and the prohibition of inventing laws about what is lawful and unlawful without God's permission. This is inferred from the context of the verses, as each one leads to the next.

Some say the city referred to here is Mecca, which God punished with famine for seven years due to their ingratitude for His blessings and denial of His messenger. They faced scarcity and their caravans were raided as a result of the Prophet's curse on them. This is mentioned by al-Ṭabrisī in *Majmaʿ al-Bayān* and attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās, Mujāhid, and Qatāda.

Although this example can fit the description mentioned, the context of the verses suggests it is a general parable introduced as a prelude to the mentioned issues.

Allah draws a parable: A town secure and peaceful. Its provision came abundantly from every place—the city is described with three sequential attributes—security, peace, and abundance of provision -with the middle one, peace, acting as a link between the two ends. A city that is safe from dangers, like attacks and natural disasters, becomes tranquil and settled. Its inhabitants do not need to disperse or flee.

Moreover, the ultimate tranquillity is achieved when its provisions come abundantly from everywhere, meaning its people do not need to undergo hardships to obtain sustenance. These three attributes—security, peace, and abundant provision—complete the material and apparent blessings for the city. To these, the subsequent verse adds spiritual blessings, *There had certainly come to them a messenger from among themselves*. Thus, it was a city blessed with both material and spiritual favors from God.

But it was ungrateful toward Allah's blessings. So Allah made it taste hunger and fear **(fa-adhāqa-hā Allāh libās al-jawʿ wa al-khawf)** ***because of what they used to do***—the phrase, *Allah's blessings*, is a collective term indicating the three types: security, peace, and the provision of sustenance. The metaphor of "tasting" signifies the transmission of a small measure of something, so making them taste hunger and fear suggests that the One who inflicted these conditions has the power to intensify and multiply them to an immeasurable extent. How could He not, when He is God, the all-powerful?

Furthermore, the association of *libās* (lit. "garb") with hunger and

fear implies encompassment and envelopment, just as clothing covers and surrounds the body. This minimal amount of hunger and fear they tasted engulfed them as clothing would, and God, in His absolute power and dominion, is capable of inflicting even more severe punishments, reflecting their utter humiliation and degradation.

The verse ends with *because of what they used to do*, emphasizing that the divine principle of recompense for gratitude and ingratitude is firmly established.

Therefore, the meaning of the verse is: "God sets forth the example of a city whose people lived in safety, free from threats to their lives, honor, and wealth, and in tranquillity, without the need to migrate. They received plentiful and wholesome sustenance from every place without needing to undergo the hardships of travel. However, they were ungrateful for these divine blessings and failed to thank God, leading Him to bestow a small portion of His punishment upon them—hunger and fear, which enveloped them in response to their persistent ingratitude."

وَلَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْهُمْ فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَخَذَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَهُمْ ظَالِمُونَ ﴿١١٣﴾

(16:113) There had certainly come to them an messenger from among themselves, but they impugned him, so the punishment seized them while they were wrongdoers.

This is the spiritual blessing added to the material ones previously mentioned. The messenger was sent to improve their worldly and afterlife conditions and warn them against ingratitude towards God blessings. However, they denied their messenger, who was a person chosen from among them and known for his divine mission and offering of guidance towards the right path. Their denial was an act of injustice, and so they were punished for their wrongdoing.

فَكُلُواْ مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ حَلاَلاً طَيِّبًا وَاشْكُرُواْ نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ إِن كُنتُمْ إِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿١١٤﴾

(16:114) So eat out of what Allah has provided you as lawful and good, and give thanks for Allah's blessing, if it is Him that you worship.

This sets the context for the following instruction: *So eat out of what Allah has provided you as lawful and good* ..., derived as a conclusion from the parable. Since experiencing such punishment results from ingratitude for abundant sustenance and denying the call to righteousness, people are instructed to eat what God has provided, as long as it is lawful and good, and to be thankful to God if they truly worship Him.

This elucidates the following:

Firstly: The verse encourages the consumption of all forms of sustenance provided by God, as long as it is lawful and good. This counters the interpretation by some that the verse refers specifically to consuming spoils of war as lawful and good, based on the assumption that the verse was revealed after the Battle of Badr. This view lacks evidence from the text itself, and it has already been established that the verse in question is Meccan.

Secondly: The terms "lawful" (*ḥalāl*) and "good" (*ṭayyib*) refer to sustenance that is naturally permissible and pleasing to the human constitution. This is the basis of religious lawfulness, which follows natural permissibility, given that religion aligns with human nature. God has equipped humans with the means to nourish themselves and made certain earthly substances from plants and animals suitable for their sustenance, to which their nature inclines without repulsion. This is lawful for consumption.

Thirdly: The command to eat (*So eat* ...) is a precursor to the command to be thankful (*and give thanks for Allah's blessing*). The mention of "blessing" alludes to the rationale that lays behind this command, as the nature of something being a blessing necessitates gratitude.

Fourthly: The phrase (*if it is Him that you worship*) is addressed to the believers, as they are the ones who worship God and no one else. The emphasis in this sentence, indicated by the placement of the object before the verb, suggests exclusivity of devotion. In contrast, polytheists worship idols and other deities besides God.

Reading this command as addressed to polytheists and claiming that "worship" here means "obedience", or that it implies polytheists worship God through their idols, is not a convincing argument. Such a reading would require additional contextual indicators, which are absent here. Polytheists do not worship God, even in a manner that involves associating others with Him, and they do not consider their worship of idols as

worship of God. They regard God as too exalted to be the focus of their worship.

The fact that the address in the verse is directed towards believers implies that the parable is intended for them, and other legislative addresses before and after this verse are also aimed at them. It has been argued that the address is for all people, both believers and non-believers, but applying this interpretation to the verses seems forced, although less problematic than restricting the address to polytheists.

إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةَ وَالدَّمَ وَلَحْمَ الْخِنزِيرِ وَمَا أُهِلَّ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ بِهِ
فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَلاَ عَادٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١١٥﴾

(16:115) He has forbidden you only carrion, blood, the flesh of the swine, and that which has been offered to other than Allah. But should someone be compelled, without being rebellious or aggressive, indeed Allah is all-forgiving, all-merciful.

The meaning of this verse has been previously discussed in the interpretation of verses 2:173, 5:3, and 6:145.

Verses with the same meaning appear in four places in the Qur'an: in Sūrah al-Anʿām and Sūrah al-Naḥl, which are Meccan surahs from the early and late periods of revelation in Mecca, and in Sūrah al-Baqara and Sūrah al-Mā'ida, which are among the first and last revelations in Medina. It has been argued that this verse shows that forbidden foods are limited to the four mentioned categories: dead animals, blood, pork, and anything dedicated to other than God, as some scholars have pointed out.

However, a study of the *sunna* reveals that these are the primary prohibitions emphasized in the Qur'an, and other prohibitions are those made by the Prophet Muḥammad, as commanded by his Lord. This is supported by His statement: *Take whatever the Messenger gives you, and relinquish whatever he forbids you* (59:7). Some narrations supporting this explanation have been mentioned earlier.

وَلاَ تَقُولُواْ لِمَا تَصِفُ أَلْسِنَتُكُمُ الْكَذِبَ هَذَا حَلاَلٌ وَهَذَا حَرَامٌ
لِّتَفْتَرُواْ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ لاَ
يُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١١٦﴾

(16:116) Do not say, asserting falsely with your tongues, 'This is lawful, and this is unlawful,' to fabricate lies against Allah. Indeed those who fabricate lies against Allah will not be felicitous.

This verse means do not claim things are lawful or unlawful based on the mere descriptions of your tongues, aiming to invent lies about God.

The address in these verses, either to believers—as suggested by their context—or to all people, supports reading the passage, *Do not say, asserting falsely with your tongues, 'This is lawful, and this is unlawful,'* as a prohibition on innovation in established societal norms and laws without divine revelation. Introducing something into the religion that is not part of it is equivalent to lying about God, even if the innovator does not attribute their actions directly to God.

Most scholars read this verse as a prohibition against the practices of the polytheists, who would deem certain things lawful, like consuming carrion, blood, and flesh sacrificed to deities other than God, or certain things as unlawful, like the *Bāḥira* and *Sā'iba*, and so on. However, as previously noted, the context does not support this reading.

Then God explains the reason for the prohibition: *Indeed those who fabricate lies against Allah will not be felicitous.* He then explains why they will not be successful in the following verse:

مَتَاعٌ قَلِيلٌ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١١٧﴾ وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ هَادُوا حَرَّمْنَا مَا قَصَصْنَا عَلَيْكَ مِن قَبْلُ وَمَا ظَلَمْنَاهُمْ وَلَكِن كَانُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿١١٨﴾

(16:117-118) A trifling enjoyment, and there will be a painful punishment for them. We forbade to the Jews what We have recounted to you earlier, and We did not wrong them, but they used to wrong themselves.

This refers, as some have said, to what God related to His Prophet, which was revealed before Sūrah al-Naḥl without any doubt, as in His statement: *To the Jews We forbade every animal having an undivided hoof* ... (6:146).

The verse serves to refute objections, linking back to the previous discussion of abrogation. It is as if someone might ask: "If the forbidden foods are limited to the four mentioned: dead animals, blood, pork, and

what is dedicated to other than God, and everything beyond them is permissible, then what about these things forbidden to the Children of Israel previously? Isn't this unjust to them?"

The response to this objection is that these prohibitions were imposed on them not due to any injustice, but because of their own wrongdoing. We forbade them certain things, which were initially lawful for them, but they wronged themselves and disobeyed their Lord, so We punished them by making these things forbidden, as God says elsewhere: *Due to the wrongdoing of the Jews, We prohibited them certain good things that were permitted to them* (4:160). The verse suggests that had they turned back to their Lord and repented for their sins, God would have accepted their repentance, lifted the restrictions, and permitted what had been forbidden to them, as He is All-Forgiving, Most-Merciful.

Therefore, it is clear that this verse is connected to the preceding discourse about the lawful and unlawful, addressing an implicit question, and that the following verse: *Then indeed your Lord, to those who commit evil out of ignorance ...* is connected to it, completing its meaning.

ثُمَّ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لِلَّذِينَ عَمِلُواْ السُّوٓءَ بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ تَابُواْ مِن بَعْدِ ذَٰلِكَ وَأَصْلَحُوٓاْ
إِنَّ رَبَّكَ مِن بَعْدِهَا لَغَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١١٩﴾

(16:119) Then indeed your Lord, to those who commit evil out of ignorance (bi-jahāla) and then repent after that, and reform—indeed, after that, your Lord will surely be all-forgiving, all-merciful.

Jahāla is of the same meaning as *jahl*. Originally, it meant the opposite of knowledge (*'ilm*), but *jahāla* is often used to imply a lack of full realization of reality, even if one has sufficient knowledge for moral accountability. This refers to those who commit forbidden acts in spite of knowing that they were prohibited, but due to being overwhelmed by their desires, they fail to fully contemplate the true nature of their transgression. Hence, they have knowledge of their actions and are accountable, yet remain ignorant of the full truth. If they had fully understood, they would not have committed the acts.

In the verse, "ignorance" signifies this meaning. If the intended meaning had been the first one—namely that the person simply did not know

they were doing anything wrong—then the evil deed would have been unknown in terms of its ruling or subject, then the act would not be a sin requiring repentance by the perpetrator, and thus, needing forgiveness and mercy from God.

The verse, as previously indicated, is connected to what precedes it, completing its content. The meaning of the two verses is that God did not wrong the Children of Israel by forbidding the good things He had made unlawful to them; rather, they wronged themselves by committing sins and persisting in them, leading to the prohibition of these good things. Despite this, the door to forgiveness and mercy remains open, and your Lord is indeed forgiving and merciful to those who do evil out of ignorance, then repent afterwards and reform, making the repentance evident and stable. Your Lord, after such repentance, is forgiving and merciful.

The specification of repentance first by reform, then referring back to it alone in the statement: *Indeed, after that* (repentance)*, your Lord will surely be all-forgiving, all-merciful* indicates that the encompassment of a servant by God's forgiveness and mercy follows from repentance. Reform is merely to clarify that the repentance is genuine and not just an empty formality.

His statement at the end of the verse: *indeed, after that, your Lord* ... is a summary of the detailed statement at the beginning: *Then indeed your Lord, to those* ..., serving to maintain the listener's understanding and highlighting the care in the subsequent forgiveness and mercy relative to repentance, similar to what was mentioned earlier: *Then indeed your Lord, to those who migrated, after they were persecuted, and strived and were patient—indeed, after that, your Lord will surely be all-forgiving, all-merciful* (16:110).

إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ كَانَ أُمَّةً قَانِتًا لِلَّهِ حَنِيفًا وَلَمْ يَكُ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٢٠﴾

(16:120) Indeed Abraham was a nation obedient to Allah, a ḥanīf, and he was not one of the polytheists.

This and the following verses are connected to the previous discussion about limiting the forbidden foods to the four categories and permitting what is beyond them. These verses, up to four in total, are like a detailed explanation of what preceded them. It is as if to say: "This is the situation

with the religion of Moses, in which we forbade the Children of Israel some of the good things permitted to them. As for this religion revealed to you, it is the same faith realized by Abraham, whom God chose and guided to a straight path, improving both his worldly life and hereafter. It is a balanced religion, in line with nature, permitting good things and forbidding the vile, bringing the same benefits to those who follow it as it brought to Abraham."

The statement: *Indeed, Abraham was a nation* is explained by al-Rāghib in the *Mufradāt* as follows: "The verse, *Indeed Abraham was a nation obedient to Allah*, means he stood as a community in the worship of God, akin to saying someone is a tribe unto themselves." This explanation is close to what has been reported from Ibn ʿAbbās. It has also been said that it means he was an exemplary leader to be followed, and it is also suggested that he was a unique nation during a period when there was no other monotheist on Earth but him.

As for His statement, *obedient to Allah* (qānitan li Allāh)*, a ḥanīf, and he was not one of the polytheists*: *Qānitan* means to obey His commands and worship Him continuously, while a *ḥanīf* is someone who inclines away from extremes and towards the path of moderation and balance.

شَاكِرًا لِّأَنْعُمِهِ اجْتَبَاهُ وَهَدَاهُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿١٢١﴾

(16:121) Grateful for His blessings, He chose him (ijtabā-hu) and guided him to a straight path.

Ijtibā' (from whence the verb *ijtabā* is derived) means "choice" in the sense of selecting someone specially, meaning God specifically chose him, keeping him safe from divergence in various beliefs. The sequence of *Grateful for His blessings*, followed by *He chose him*, implies that God chose Abraham because he was grateful for His blessings, supporting the previous explanation in Sūrah al-Aʿrāf that the essence of gratitude is sincerity in servitude: *You will not find most of them to be grateful* (7:17).

وَآتَيْنَاهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَإِنَّهُ فِي الآخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿١٢٢﴾

(16:122) We gave him good (ḥasana) in this world, and in the Hereafter he will indeed be among the Righteous.

The word "good" means a good life, as Abraham was indeed wealthy

and greatly respected.

We have spoken extensively about the meaning of God choosing someone (*ijtibā'*) in Sūrah Yūsuf (12:6) as referring to "guidance" (*hidāya*); the meaning of the Straight Path in the verse of Sūrah al-Fātiḥa: *Guide us to the Straight Path* (1:6). As for the passage, *and in the Hereafter he will indeed be among the Righteous*, this echoes the verse of Sūrah al-Baqarah (2:130), which also concerns Abraham.

In describing Abraham with these attributes, there's an indication that these are the gifts of this upright religion. If a person adopts it, it will likewise lead them to what it led Abraham to.

ثُمَّ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ أَنِ اتَّبِعْ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٢٣﴾

(16:123) Then We revealed to you, 'Follow the creed of Abraham, a ḥanīf, and he was not one of the polytheists.'

This verse emphasizes his quality of "inclining" towards the truth and his rejection of polytheism.

إِنَّمَا جُعِلَ السَّبْتُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَيَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿١٢٤﴾

(16:124) The Sabbath (sabt) was only prescribed for those who differed about it. Your Lord will indeed judge between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning that about which they used to differ.

The root of *sabt* means "to cut" or "to crease." Some have said that Saturday is named "the Sabbath" because God began creating the heavens and the earth on Sunday and completed them in six days, as mentioned, ceasing His work on the Sabbath.

One might use the verb *sabata* to signify that someone observed the Sabbath; the verse *their fish would come to them on the Sabbath day* (yawm sabtihim)—some have said it means the fish would come on the day they ceased working, others have said that it means they did not cease working, and others still have said it means they would come on days other than the Sabbath. *The Sabbath was only prescribed* means they were commanded to avoid working on that day; *and make your sleep for rest* (subātan) (78:9),

meaning a time in which you weren't working, *that you may rest in it* (10:67)—this refers to a cessation of work, symbolizing the night's purpose for rest.

Thus, the Sabbath, as mentioned, refers to the day itself, but its meaning involves the cessation of work and its legislation. It might also refer to the concept of ceasing work, rather than the day designated for it, as apparent in the verse: *their fish would come to them on the Sabbath day, visibly on the shore, but on days when they were not keeping Sabbath they would not come to them* (7:163).

The essence of the statement is that the establishment of the Sabbath was specifically ordained for those mentioned, implying a sense of exclusivity and ownership. God legislated for them to cease work one day each week, dedicating it entirely to the worship of their Lord, which is the Sabbath day, just as He has designated for Muslims a day each week for communal worship and prayer, which is Friday.

Thus, *The Sabbath was only prescribed for* (ʿalā) *those who differed about it* uses *ʿalā* (lit. "on") instead of *lām* ("for"), similar to saying: "I have a debt over you" (*lī ʿalayk dayn*) meaning a duty or responsibility. It implies obligation, intensification, and trial. This shows that the imposition of the Sabbath was a burden, not a benefit, as their situation eventually led to some being cursed and others transformed into animals, as per verses 2:65 and 4:47.

The most fitting interpretation of *those who differed about it* is their disagreement following its legislation, as they divided into groups: those who accepted it, those who rejected it, and those who hypocritically sought to work around it, as related in Sūrah al-Baqara, Sūrah al-Nisāʾ, and Sūrah al-Aʿrāf. This explanation is contrary to the idea that they differed before its imposition, where they might have been offered to observe Friday instead but were given Saturday due to their disagreement, as we find in some narrations. The meaning is that the Sabbath, or the cessation of work for worship one day a week, was imposed as a test and burden on the Israelites, who differed in their observance of it after its legislation: With some who accepted it, some who rejected it, and others who sought to work on that day while outwardly appearing to accept it. And God will judge among them on the Day of Judgement regarding their differences.

Based on this, the structure of the verse is similar to His previous

statement: *We forbade to the Jews what We have recounted to you earlier …* (16:118), meaning it serves as a response to an implicit question, connected to the previous discussion on abrogation. The presumption is that the imposition of the Sabbath for the Israelites was not for their benefit, but rather as a trial from God to test them, as has been repeatedly exemplified in their history due to their repeated disobedience of His commands. Essentially, this verse addresses the objection regarding the legislation of non-natural laws for the Israelites and their abrogation in this new law brought by the Prophet

It was not combined with the previous statement: *We forbade to the Jews what We have recounted to you earlier …*, because the matter of the Sabbath is distinct from the issue of legalizing good things and specifying forbidden foods. It is understood that the discourse, from: *We forbade to the Jews …* to *… and he was not one of the polytheists*, forms a complete sequence of seven verses, with this verse on the Sabbath being the eighth, serving as an appendix to them.

This clarifies the response to the objection about why the matter of the Sabbath is sandwiched between the command to the Prophet to follow the religion of Abraham and the directive to invite others to it. In other words, placing *The Sabbath was only prescribed …*, between *Then We revealed to you …*, and *Invite to the way of your Lord …*, seems disconnected, like separating a tree from its bark.

The summary of the response is that *Then We revealed to you, 'Follow the creed of Abraham …*, completes the previous discourse, and *The Sabbath was only prescribed …*, connects to what precedes it, as we have explained. However, *Invite to the way of your Lord …*, represents the beginning of a new discourse, instructing the Prophet to invite to the way of God using various methods of communication, not specifically to the religion of Abraham, though the way of God is essentially the religion of Abraham.

As for the various explanations of the verb *differed*, there are deep disagreements. Some scholars say that the intended meaning is that the Sabbath was imposed on those who disagreed with their prophet about it, when he commanded them to honor Friday, but they deviated and chose Saturday, making it a burden upon them by God. Hence, the disagreement is seen as preceding the imposition, not following it. Sometimes, the preposition *fī* in *ikhtalafū fī-hi* ("differed about it") is interpreted as

indicating causation, meaning the disagreement did not occur concerning the Sabbath, but rather due to it.

Furthermore, it has been suggested that the verb *differed* means "they disobeyed", as they contradicted their prophet regarding the Sabbath and did not dispute it.

It is also said that they were commanded to observe a day of assembly without the specific day being designated, leaving it to their discretion, leading to their scholars differing in its determination, and they were not guided by God in this regard, hence they fell into disagreement observing the Sabbath.

Another view suggests that the intended meaning is that they differed among themselves regarding the Sabbath; one group preferred Saturday over Friday, while another did the opposite, preferring Friday over Saturday. There are various other interpretations, with the basis being the narratives mentioned in some reports.

You are well aware that none of these interpretations perfectly match the verse's wording, so we return to the explanation previously provided.

ادْعُ إِلَىٰ سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلْهُم بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَن ضَلَّ عَن سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١٢٥﴾

(16:125) Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom (ḥikma) and good advice (mawʿiẓa ḥasana) and dispute with them in a manner that is best (jādil-hum billatī hiya aḥsan). Indeed, your Lord knows best those who stray from His way, and He knows best those who are guided.

This undoubtedly suggests that these three elements—wisdom, good advice, and disputation in a manner that is best—are methods of communication and dialogue. It instructs the Prophet to invite people to the way of God using one of these approaches, although argumentation is not typically considered a form of invitation in its narrower sense.

Ḥikma ("wisdom") is defined in *al-Mufradāt* as "attaining the truth through knowledge and reason." *Mawʿiẓa* ("advice"), as defined by al-Khalīl, means to admonish people to do good in a way that softens the heart. *Jidāl* ("disputation"), as defined in *al-Mufrafāt*, is "a discussion characterized by disagreement and trying to overcome one another with

arguments."

Reflecting on these meanings, it seems that wisdom refers to an argument producing indisputable and unequivocal truth without leaving any room for ambiguity. Instruction is an exposition that softens and appeals to the heart, including elements beneficial for the listener, such as lessons, commendable acclaim, and praiseworthy effects. Disputation is using an argument to dissuade the opponent from their insistence and dispute, not necessarily with the intention of revealing the truth but to challenge their position or argument.

Thus, what God mentioned about wisdom, advice, and argumentation aligns with what is known in the discipline of logic as demonstration (*burhān*), rhetoric (*khaṭāba*), and dialectic (*jidāl*).

However, God Almighty has qualified advice with "good" and disputation with "the best," indicating that not all forms of advice are good and not all forms of disputation are the best or even good. God commands only the good advice and the best form of disputation be employed in the service of the truth.

Perhaps the reasoning provided at the end of the verse, *Indeed your Lord knows best those who stray from His way, and He knows best those who are guided*, clarifies the rationale for such a limitation. This means that God is most knowledgeable about the state of those who have deviated from His true religion and those who are rightly guided. He knows that what benefits this path are wisdom, good advice, and the best forms of disputation, and nothing else.

Sound judgement supports this, as His way is the true belief and righteous action. It is known that inviting to it through advice, for example, by someone who does not heed their own advice, is effectively an invitation to the opposite of what is verbally promoted. Similarly, inviting through disputation using false premises accepted by the opponent to demonstrate the truth is promoting the truth by promoting falsehood, or if you will, promoting the truth by extinguishing it, unless these false premises are being presented to expose the falsity of the opponent's claims.

Therefore, it becomes evident that the goodness of advice is in terms of its beneficial effect on the truth intended by it. The one giving advice themselves should heed the advice they give, employing commendable character traits that enhance the reception and acceptance in the listener's

heart, softening it and making it receptive.

In disputation, one should avoid anything that might provoke the opponent to respond with stubbornness or lead them to obstinacy and belligerence. The use of false premises, even if accepted by the opponent, should be avoided unless it is for contradiction. Care should be taken to avoid poor expression, derogation of the opponent or their sacred beliefs, insults, or any other form of ignorance, as this would be reviving truth through falsehood, essentially nullifying the truth, as mentioned.

Disputation requires a higher degree of excellence than advice, which is why God Almighty permits only the good in instruction and only the best in disputation.

In His statement, *Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good advice and dispute with them in a manner that is best*, there is a prioritization in terms of individuals. Wisdom is authorised in all its aspects, advice is divided into good and not good with only the good advice being sanctioned, and disputation is divided into good and not good, then the good further into the best and others, with only the best form of disputation being authorised. The verse remains silent about distributing these methods according to the invitees, so the key to their use depends on the context, aiming for a positive impact and the manifestation of truth.

It is possible that in one situation all three methods are used, while in another, only two or one method may be appropriate, depending on the circumstances and context.

From this, it becomes clear that the view of some commentators that the verse apparently suggests combining all three methods in the Prophet's preaching is not necessarily correct, as there is no evidence suggesting the necessity of combining them for every individual recipient. However, for all recipients collectively, this combination is indeed achievable.

Similarly, the suggestion by some that the three methods mentioned in the verse are ordered according to the varying levels of understanding among people in their readiness to accept the truth has its intricacies but does not necessarily imply that each method is exclusive to a particular level of understanding: People with high intellectual capacity, the elite, are invited with wisdom, which is reasoning. The common people, with their predispositions to tangible things and strong adherence to traditions and customs, are invited with good advice. Those who are obstinate and

argumentative, who debate falsehood to negate truth and stubbornly adhere to their ancestral fallacies, are those who are commanded to be disputed with in the best manner.

While this viewpoint has its subtleties, it does not exclude the possibility that the elite might benefit from advice and disputation, or that the common people, deeply entrenched in customs and traditions, might benefit from the best form of argumentation. There's no explicit indication in the verse's language to support this specificity of methods to certain groups.

Similarly, some have mentioned that argumentation in the best manner is not a part of invitation at all, but rather has a different purpose, which is to obligate and expose the fallacy. They said: "This is why the disputation in the verse is not coordinated with what precedes it, but the context is changed, stating: *and dispute with them in a manner that is best*." However, this overlooks the true nature of dialectical reasoning. While exposing fallacy might be the goal of dialectical reasoning, it is not always the end goal, as often an argument is composed of accepted or given premises, especially in practical matters and non-certain sciences like jurisprudence, legal theory, ethics, and literary arts, without necessarily intending to obligate or expose fallacy.

Moreover, in argumentation and exposing fallacies, there is an invitation, just as there is an invitation in advising, albeit with different forms depending on the methods. Yes, the change in context is due to the contentious and combative nature of argumentation.

وَإِنْ عَاقَبْتُمْ فَعَاقِبُواْ بِمِثْلِ مَا عُوقِبْتُم بِهِ وَلَئِن صَبَرْتُمْ لَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لِّلصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٢٦﴾

(16:126) And if you retaliate (wa in ʿāqabtum), retaliate with the like of what you have been made to suffer, but if you are patient that is surely better for the patient.

In *al-Mufradāt*, al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī writes is said in the lexicon that *ʿaqūba*, *ʿiqāb*, and *muʿāqaba* all signify punishment and retribution. The root meaning of *ʿaqab* (from whence the verb *ʿāqabtum* is derived) is the back or rear of the foot, and the consequence or outcome (*ʿaqīb*) of a matter is what follows it. To retaliate (*muʿāqaba*) against someone is to bring something unpleasant upon them following their action that caused you

harm, fitting the concept of retribution or equivalent recompense.

Thus, His statement: *And if you retaliate, retaliate with the like of what you have been made to suffer ...* is addressed to the Muslims, as the context suggests, implying that the intended retaliation is against the polytheists and disbelievers, and *with the like of what you have been made to suffer* refers to the disbelievers' punishment of them for believing in God and rejecting their idols.

Therefore, the meaning of the verse is: "If you intend to retaliate against the disbelievers and punish them, then do so with the same measure they used to punish you for your faith and struggle in the cause of God."

... but if you are patient that is surely better for the patient—This means if you endure the hardship you faced without seeking retribution, it is better for you, as you are patient. This is preferable because it involves preferring God's pleasure and reward in enduring trials and tribulations over satisfying one's desire for revenge. This act becomes purely for God's sake, and in forgiveness and pardon, there lies the practice of noble character, which has its beautiful consequences for the one who observes it.

وَاصْبِرْ وَمَا صَبْرُكَ إِلاَّ بِاللَّهِ وَلاَ تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلاَ تَكُ فِي ضَيْقٍ مِّمَّا يَمْكُرُونَ ﴿١٢٧﴾

(16:127) So be patient, and you cannot be patient except with Allah. And do not grieve for them, nor be upset by their guile.

This is a command to the Prophet Muḥammad to be patient and a reassurance to him that God strengthens him to endure the hardships in His path. God mentions that his patience is only through His power and strength. Then He commands him to be patient, implying that the Prophet is capable of what He commands him to do. Thus, *and you cannot be patient except with Allah*, indicates that God has empowered the Prophet for what He has commanded him to do.

His statement, *And do not grieve for them*, refers to the disbelievers, on account of their disbelief. This meaning has been previously explained in this chapter and others.

His statement, *... nor be upset by their guile*, apparently means to forbid feeling distressed by their scheming, either currently or continuously, rather than just in the future.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَواْ وَّالَّذِينَ هُم مُّحْسِنُونَ ﴿١٢٨﴾

(16:128) Indeed Allah is with those who are Godwary and those who are virtuous.

This signifies that both piety and excellence each independently lead to divine support and nullify the plots of the religion's enemies, countering their schemes. Thus, this verse explains the reason for the statement, *nor be upset by their guile*, and promises victory.

These last three verses of the chapter (126-128) are more akin in their content to the Medinan verses than the Meccan ones. There are reports from both Sunnī and Shīʿa sources stating that they were revealed as the Prophet Muḥammad returned from Uḥud, which will be discussed in the section on narrations, below. Although it is possible to connect them to the preceding verses, as some have attempted, it is important to note that the verse preceding these three aligns more closely with the purpose of the chapter. Ignoring the verses, "And those who emigrated" and "Whoever disbelieves in God after his belief," along with a few others, and the statement, "And if you punish," to the end of the chapter, the verses of the chapter follow a single, connected narrative.

Examining Narrations

(1) In the *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, regarding the verse, *Allah draws a parable* ... (16:112), it is stated: Imām ʿAlī said, "This verse was revealed concerning a people who had a river called al-Tharthār. Their land was fertile and abounding in goodness. They used dough for cleanliness after relieving themselves, saying it was softer for them. Thus, they disbelieved in God's blessings and treated them lightly, leading to God withholding waters of the River Tharthār, causing drought to the extent that they were compelled to eat the very dough they used for cleansing, even rationing it among themselves.

Author's comment: This narration is also found in *al-Kāfī*, reported by ʿAmr b. Shimr from Abū ʿAbd Allāh, with detailed explanation. Al-ʿAyyāshī also narrated from Ḥafṣ and Zayd al-Shaḥḥām from him.

(2) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, Ibn Mardawayh reports from Anas b. Mālik, who stated that the Prophet Muḥammad said, "No servant is witnessed for by a nation unless God accepts their testimony. A

"nation" refers to a man and those who come after him. Indeed, God says, *Indeed Abraham was a nation obedient to Allah, a ḥanīf, and he was not one of the polytheists.*"

Author's comment: The explanation of the verses about testimony related to this tradition has been previously discussed.

(3) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, from Sumāʿa b. Mihrān, it is reported that he heard Abū ʿAbd Allāh saying, "Indeed, in the world and everything in it there was only one person worshiping God: Abraham. If there had been anyone else with him, they would have been included. This is when God says, *Indeed Abraham was a nation obedient to Allah, a ḥanīf, and he was not one of the polytheists.* Abraham remained in this state as long as God willed, then God consoled him with Ishmael and Isaac, so they became three."

Author's comment: This is also reported in *al-Kāfī* from Sumāʿa, from "a righteous servant."

(4) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related from al-Shāfiʿī in *Kitāb al-Umm*, Bukhārī, and Muslim, all of whom report from Abū Hurayra, who narrated that the Prophet Muḥammad said, "We are the last to come but the foremost on the Day of Judgement. The others were given the Book before us, and we received it after them. Friday is their day which was prescribed for them, but they disagreed over it. God guided us to it. Thus, others follow us in this regard: the Jews tomorrow and the Christians the day after."

Author's comment: Similar narrations are reported by Aḥmad and Muslim from Abū Hurayra and Ḥudayfa from him, but this narration is not found in commentaries on this verse.

(5) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, Ibn Mardawayh reports from Abū Layla al-Ashʿarī that the Prophet said, "Adhere to obedience to your leaders and do not oppose them, as obedience to them is obedience to God, and disobedience to them is disobedience to God. God has indeed sent me to call to His path with wisdom and good advice. Whoever opposes me in this is among the doomed, and God and His Messenger's responsibility for him is absolved. Whoever takes charge of any of your affairs and acts contrary to this, upon him is the curse of God, the angels, and all the people."

(6) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, regarding the verse *and dispute with them in a manner that is best,* it is said: Imām ʿAlī commented, "With

the Qur'an."

(7) In *al-Kāfī*, it is narrated from Abū ʿAmr al-Zubarī who heard from Abū ʿAbd Allāh regarding the verse, *Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good advice and dispute with them in a manner that is best* (16:125): "It means according the Qur'an."

Author's comment: It appears that this is a reading of *in a manner that is best*, and it essentially means to argue according to the etiquette prescribed in the Qur'an, which contains the etiquettes set down by God in there.

(8) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is narrated from Ḥasan b. Ḥamza: I heard Abū ʿAbd Allāh saying, "When the Messenger of God saw what was done to Ḥamza b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, he said, "O God, to You belongs all praise and to You are all complaints, and You are the One sought for help against what I see." Then he said, "If I overcome Quraysh, I will surely mutilate seventy men in return." Then God revealed: *And if you retaliate, retaliate with the like of what you have been made to suffer, but if you are patient that is surely better for the patient.* So the Messenger of God said, "I will be patient, I will be patient."

(9) And in *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is reported by Ibn al-Mundhir, al-Ṭabarānī, Ibn Mardawayh, and al-Bayhaqī in *Dalā'il* that Ibn ʿAbbās said, "On the day Ḥamza was killed and mutilated, the Messenger of God said, "If I overcome Quraysh, I will surely mutilate seventy men from them." Then God revealed the verse, and the Messenger of God said, "Rather, we will be patient, O Lord." So he was patient and forbade mutilation."

Author's comment: Similar narrations were also reported from Ubayy b. Kaʿb, Abū Hurayra, and others from the Prophet.

(End of Chapter 16 and Volume 24)

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About the Author

The late ʿAllāmah al-Tabātabāʾī's fame rests on his academic works—the most important being his great exegesis of the Qur'an, *al-Mīzān fī tafsīr al-Qur'an.* It is said to be the foundation stone of the academic prestige which ʿAllāmah al-Tabātabāʾī was accorded in the Muslim world.

Among his other works is *Usūl-i falsafah va ravish-i ri'alism* (Practical and Philosophical Principles of Realism). This book is a comparative study of Islamic philosophy and various modern anti-Islamic schools of thoughts, especially Marxism. His disciple, the late Murtadā Mutahharī, annotated this work, thus making it easily accessible to the average man.

A third book, *Shiʿa dār Islām*, was first published in Persian; later it was published in English with the title, *Shi'ite Islam.* The ʿAllāmah wrote this book on the request of Professor Kenneth Morgan of Colgate University, to introduce Shiism to the West.

However, it is his *tafsīr, al-Mīzān* (published in 20 volumes in Arabic) which presents the true picture of the author's academic style and his way of thinking. In the preface to English volume 1, the author outlines his plan, to explain the Qur'an with the help of the Qur'an itself. This he faithfully does, all the way through to the end of the *tafsīr*.